DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 261 186 CE 042 341

AUTHOR	Bruno, Sam J., Ed.
TITLE	Business Communication: From the Ideal to the Practicable. Association for Business Communication Southwest Division 1985 Proceedings (New Orleans, Louisiana, March 7-9, 1985).
INSTITUTION	Houston Univ., Tex. Clear Lake City Branch.
PUB DATE	Jul 85
NOTE	146p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Sam J. Bruno, University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2700 Bay Area Blvd., Houston, TX 77058.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Academic Achievement; *Business Communication; Business Correspondence; Business Education; Career Choice; *Communication Problems; Computer Oriented Programs; Conference Proceedings; Content Analysis; Course Content; *Course Organization; Curriculum Design; *Educational Innovation; Employer Attitudes; Grading; Periodicals; Readability; Research; Sex Bias; Sex Differences; Sex Fairness; *Sex Stereotypes; *Student Evaluation; Teacher Attitudes; Videotape Recordings; Writing (Composition)

ABSTRACT

These proceedings present 12 articles that suggest opportunities for scholars and practitioners to contribute to business communication. The papers are organized into four sections, each composed of three papers. The papers in Part I, Specialized Communication Techniques, are: "Does Style Affect the Reader's Image of the Writer?" (James Suchan), "A Preliminary Study of the Effects on Reader Behavior of Changes in the Order of Material Presented: A 'Discussion Paper'" (Richard Wiegand), and "Promoting Vertical Communication through Survey Feedback" (Stephen R. Axley). Part II contains papers concerned with curriculum implications: "An Investigation of Business/Organizational Communication Courses in AACSB-Accredited Schools of Business--Trends in Structure and Content" (Robert B. Mitchell, Marian C. Crawford), "A Comparative Study of Business Employers and Educators Concerning Most Significant Business Communication Topics" (Timothy W. Clipson, Marlin C. Young), and "A Long-Term Look at the Readability of Selected Business Periodicals" (Gary L. Clark, Jerry Geisler). The papers in Part III deal with gender perceptions for communication: "An Empirical Study of Sex-Characteristic Stereotypes versus Sex-Role Stereotypes Affecting Women in Management" (Leann K. Ellis, et al.), "Male-Female Differences in Communicating Job-Related Humor: An Exploratory Study" (Joe A. Cox, et al.), and "Can Sex-Biased Communication Affect Business Students' Career Decisions?" (Sallye S. Benoit, L. Wayne Shell). Part IV offers suggestions for innovative teaching and evaluation: "Video Cases" (Joseph F. Ceccio, Diana C. Reep), "Holistic Grading in Business Communications" (Lorrie M. Steerey), and "Using Personal Computer for Textual Analysis" (Arthur B. Smith). (YLB)

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Business Communication:

1985 Proceedings

Sam J. Bruno
Editor

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Cover Design: Richard Adams

PREFACE

The articles published in this volume cover a broad sweep of topics and each reader should find at least one paper of particular interest. As the editor, I'm grateful to the authors who have worked so hard to meet the deadline of these Proceedings.

Indeed, it is gratifying to note these Proceedings contain a great range of points-of-view, suggesting that many opportunities remain for scholars and practitioners to contribute to business communication. It is hoped that papers included in this work will encourage more thinking about communication techniques, communication needs, the international dimension of business communication, gender perceptions in communication and innovative teaching and evaluation.

An analysis of these papers suggests the emphasis of business communication is changing. Especially with communication theory. Theory building is incorporating more and more considerations from other disciplines. For example, several papers explicitly focused on issues of scientific inquiry as they relate to reader behavior, managerial style, and organizational communication. Furthermore, there seems to be greater tolerance toward different approaches to theory development, following a similar pattern with respect to the history of letter writing. It is hoped that future scholars in business communication will keep open minds about what is appropriate or not appropriate in developing communication theory.

These Proceedings clearly indicate a shift away from the elements of letter and report writing toward a more macromanagerial communication perspective. Interestingly, many of the traditional business communication concepts seem to be present as elements or subsets of the more macromanagerial issues of organizational communication, internationalization of business communication, and the interdependence between business communication and other disciplines.

Even though the development of communication theory seems to rely more on the macromanagerial perspective, there are still several significant differences between the emerging approach and the classical approach to business communication. Witness, for example, the sharp differences with the traditional how-to-do-it concepts and the theoretical concerns with specialized communication techniques. Unlike the older approaches, these papers show a strong interest in linking business communication with other functional areas, such as finance, management, and marketing.

Finally, business communication--as well as theorizing about business communication--is becoming less of a discipline in isolation and

more a discipline in interaction with environmental forces, governmental regulations, reader behavior, organizational structures, and the international dimension of business. Thus contemporary business communication issues need to focus on macroenvironmental issues and lean toward a more theoretical application.

The twelve papers included in this volume are organized into four sections:

- specialized communication techniques
- curriculum implications
- gender perceptions in communication
- innovative teaching and evaluation

Contributors to these Proceedings provided camera ready copies. These camera ready manuscripts expedited and minimized the cost of publishing this work. Except for minor changes necessitated by typographical errors in manuscripts and errors in reference construction, the editor avoided any alterations in this collection of papers.

Thus, papers appearing in this volume are as they were originally presented at the conference. The sequencing of these papers corresponds to the program. The complete conference program is included in these Proceedings. Only 12 of the 37 papers presented at the Spring meeting appear in this work.

As evident from the conference program and the contents of this volume, Betty S. Johnson of Lamar University arranged an outstanding program and Betty truly deserves our hearty congratulations.

An undertaking such as this deserves the acknowledgment of many persons. Foremost among them are the authors who prepared their manuscripts according to a very detailed set of instructions. Others also had a role in the preparation of this collection of papers. I am grateful to Mary Jo Westover, my most capable student assistant, for preparing the prefatory parts, correcting typographical errors and reference documentations, and carefully proofreading the entire manuscript. I am happy to record my special thanks to Mrs. Jean Hart, my loyal and dedicated assistant, for performing many miscellaneous jobs associated with publishing this volume. Jean proved once again her loyalty, competence and dedication to duty in skillfully handling many assignments under pressure.

I am eager, also, to acknowledge that the existence of these Proceedings is due in large measure to Dr. William A. Staples, Interim Dean of the School of Business and Public Administration, for his generous financial contribution and interest in having these Proceedings published. All too often I feel we overlook the support that Deans provide our Association. For that reason, as well as many others, I say on behalf of the

Southwest Region of the Association for Business Communication, a personal and professional "Thanks, Bill." Additional financial support for publishing these papers was received from the SW-ABC treasury.

University of Houston-Clear Lake
July, 1985

Sam J. Bruno
Editor
ABC-Southwest Region

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PROGRAM

ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION
SOUTHWEST DIVISION

March 7-9, 1985

Sheraton New Orleans Hotel

Program Chairperson: BETTY S. JOHNSON, Lamar University
Secretary Treasurer: SARA HART, Sam Houston State University

THURSDAY, MARCH 7

1:00 p.m.. - 1:45 p.m. AURORA

OPENING SESSION:

Presiding: LARRY R. SMELTZER, Louisiana State University, President, ABC-SW

Welcome: JOHN M. PENROSE, The University of Texas at Austin, Vice-President--Southwest, ABC

Remarks: PHILLIP V. LEWIS, Abilene Christian University 1983-84 President, ABCA

1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m. AURORA

SPECIALIZED COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Chairperson: SAM MURPHY, West Texas State University

Does Style Affect the Reader's Image of the Writer?
JAMES SUCHAN, The University of Alabama
RON DULEK, The University of Alabama

A Preliminary Study of the Effects on Reader Behavior of Changes in the Order of Material Presented
RICHARD WIEGAND, The University of Alabama

Promoting Vertical Communication Through Survey Feedback
STEPHEN R. AXLEY, Western Illinois University

3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. AURORA

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

Chairperson: DONALD ENGLISH, East Texas State University

An Investigation of Business/Organizational Communication Courses in AACSB Accredited Schools of Business--Trends in Structure and Content
ROBERT B. MITCHELL, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
MARIAN C. CRAWFORD, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Communication Needs in Business--Executive, Mid-Level, Entry-Level, and Non-Management Priorities for Curriculum Development
ROBERT J. OLNEY, Southwest Texas State University
JAMES C. BENNETT, The University of Texas at Austin
ANITA S. BEDNAR, Central State University

A Comparative Study of Faculty and Business Leaders' Opinions Concerning Most Significant Business Communication Topics
TIMOTHY CLIPSON, Stephen F. Austin State University
MARLIN L. YOUNG, Stephen F. Austin State University

A Long-Term Look at the Readability of Selected Business Periodicals
GARY L. CLARK, Northern Illinois University
JERRY GEISLER, Eastern Illinois University

FRIDAY, MARCH 8

8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS' WORKSHOP

Session A BONNIE BURN

Chairperson: BEVERLY HOUSE, University of New Orleans

American Techniques in International Business Communications
RAY LESIKAR, North Texas State University
GAIL WATERS, North Texas State University

Session B FELICITY

Chairperson: SARA HART, Sam Houston State University

Income Beyond the University: A Look at Extracurricular Communication Activities
JOHN PENROSE, The University of Texas at Austin

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 Noon DISTINGUISHED SPEAKERS' WORKSHOP

Session A BONNIE BURN

Chairperson: LAMAR REINSCH, Abilene Christian University

From Ho Hum to Gung Ho--Enlivening the Business Communication Class
NANCY S. DARSEY, Lamar University

Session B FELICITY

Chairperson: JOHN D. PETTIT, JR., North Texas State University

An Imperative: The Exigency for a Change in the Focus of Business Communication Research
WILLIAM J. LORD, The University of Texas at Austin

1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. ST CHARLES B

Joint Session: ASSOCIATION FOR BUSINESS COMMUNICATION, SOUTHWEST AND SOUTHWEST ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Chairpersons: MARIAN C. CRAWFORD, University of Arkansas at Little Rock
BETTY S. JOHNSON, Lamar University

Telecommunications: Concepts, Development, and Management
JOHN BLYTH, Regional Regulatory Manager, MCI Telecommunications, Southfield, Michigan

3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. ST CHARLES B

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Table Chairpersons:
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2. JOHN WALTMAN, Louisiana State University
3. GERAD NISTAL, Our Lady of Holy Cross College
4. DEBBIE RENSHAW, Oklahoma State University
5. BRENDA OSIGWEH, Northeast Missouri State University
6. LARRY R. SMELTZER, Louisiana State University

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BUSINESS MEETING — BAYSIDE A

Presiding: Betty S. Johnson, Lamar University, ABC-SW Chairperson

9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. — BAYSIDE A

GENDER PERCEPTIONS IN COMMUNICATION

Chairperson: JOHN SCHELL, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

An Empirical Study of Sex-Characteristic Stereotypes Versus Sex-Role Stereotypes Affecting Women in Management
WALLACE V. SCHMIDT, University of Texas at Tyler
VIRGINIA EMAN WHEELESS, Texas Tech University
LEANN K. ELLIS, South Plains College

Female Differences in Communicating Job-Related Humor: An Exploratory Study
JOE A. COX, Baylor University
RAYMOND L. READ, Baylor University
PHILIP M. VAN AUKEN, Baylor University

Can Sex-Biased Communication Affect Business Students' Career Decisions?
SALLYE S. BENOIT, Nicholls State University
L. WAYNE SHELL, Nicholls State University

10:30 a.m. - 12:00 Noon BAYSIDE A

INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND EVALUATION

Chairperson: WILLIAM J. VAUGHN, Pan American University at Brownsville

Video Cases
DIANA C. REEP, University of Akron
JOSEPH F. CECCIO, University of Akron

Teaching the "Large" Business Communication Class: An Experimental Study Using Group Techniques and Peer/Teaching/Learning
JAMES D. BELL, The University of Texas at Austin

Holistic Grading in Business Communication
LORRIE STEEREY, Eastern Montana College

Experiments in Using Computer Software to Evaluate Student Writing
ARTHUR B. SMITH, Arizona State University

PART 1

SPECIALIZED COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

DOES STYLE AFFECT THE READER'S IMAGE OF THE WRITER?*

James Suchan, University of Alabama

ABSTRACT

This study determines whether shifts in the style of messages affect the reader's image of the writer. The test sample consisted of 878 undergraduate students divided into four groups. Two messages written in different styles were used. Each group was given two messages to read, each message written in a different style and dealing with different content. After reading the messages, students filled out a response sheet containing 18 semantic differential items. Factor analysis was used to evaluate the responses.

Shifts in style had little impact on students' perception of the writers of the various messages. These results may be caused by the fact that the messages' content had a greater impact on the students than their style and that the students had stereotyped the writers based on the messages' content.

INTRODUCTION

Style is a quicksilver concept that writing specialists have tried hard to grasp. To better understand the impact that style has on readers, researchers such as Joseph Williams, Louis Milic, and William Zinsser have classified various styles and speculated when they are appropriate [2]. Perhaps the most enlightening study of managerial communications style is John Fielden's Harvard Business Review article "What Do You Mean You Don't Like My Style?" [1]. Fielden classifies style into six categories -- forceful, passive, personal, impersonal, colorful, and colorless -- and describes the organizational situations in which these styles are appropriate.

Without doubt Fielden's, Williams', Milic's, and Zinsser's attempts to understand style are needed and extremely useful. However, their speculations are risky because they are based on experience and opinion,

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*Research support for this project was supplied by The University of Alabama Management Communications Research Group.

not on empirical research. This study takes an empirical look at how style affects readers. As its starting point, the study relies on Fielden's definition of four commonly used managerial styles: personal, impersonal, forceful, and passive. From that starting point the study determines to what extent style affects the reader's image of the writer.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

The jumble of theories from rhetoric, composition, and linguistics can confuse any discussion of style. This hodgepodge of theories can be simplified by classifying them into three categories [3].

The first group of theories can be characterized by the maxim, "style is the man." In all likelihood derived from Plato's concept of the "vir bonus" or good man, this general theory posits that style is an extension of personality. In short, a writer discovers the style that is already a part of him; he does not affect a style in order to make a desired impression.

The second grouping pivots on the notion that style and content are inseparable. Discussion of style become irrelevant because there is no fissure or crack that divides style from meaning. Thus, it is impossible to isolate and engineer meaningful elements of style.

The final set of theories, which provide the theoretical underpinning for this paper, claims that style is an artifice that writers manipulate to achieve desired ends. This dualistic view implies that style is distinct from content and that specific situations -- negative and persuasive ones, for example -- call for different styles. Moreover, this approach suggests that readers can indeed notice (either consciously or unconsciously) and respond favorably to the persona that an artful writer presents to the reader. This paper will determine if indeed the manipulation of style affects the readers' image of the writer.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An extensive on-line computer search was conducted to locate research examining business style. Although myriad articles on style and several on source credibility were found, no empirical research was uncovered which analyzed the effect that style had on the reader's image of the writer.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Two groups of students were tested. One group, an untrained sample, was made up of 518 University of Alabama sophomores and juniors tested during the spring semester of 1983. These students were enrolled in an introductory business communications course and had completed a two-semester freshman composition requirement. Because these students were tested during the first week of the semester, they had not been taught stylistic strategies such as "you viewpoint," "reader adaptation," "positive statement," and the manipulation of the active and passive voice. However, it was impossible to determine what these students had learned about style in their freshman composition courses.

The trained student sample was composed of 360 juniors and seniors enrolled in an advanced business communications course. These students had taken the introductory course in business communication and, as a result, had been taught how to manipulate personal pronouns, active and passive verbs, sentence types, and diction to achieve a range of stylistic ends.

DESCRIPTION OF THE WRITING SAMPLES

Two messages written in two different styles were used in this study. The first message described the requirements of a business report writing course, the second discussed a career in nursing (see Appendix A for samples of the messages).

There was a specific reason for choosing the subject matter for these messages. The study tried to determine the impact that message content had on the reader's perception of the writer. In other words, did message content rather than manipulation of style shape the reader's image of the writer? One message, the course description, was designed to be part of the students' immediate experience -- within a year or two almost all students would be taking a report writing course. As a result students would more than likely be interested in the content of the message. The content of the other message, the description of a career in nursing, had no role in our students' academic experience -- none of the sample respondents was pursuing a career in nursing. Consequently, students should feel neutral toward the nursing passages.

One message was written in a forceful, personal style; the other in a passive, impersonal one. The styles of the messages were engineered by manipulating two variables that, according to Fielden, have a significant impact on style: personal pronouns and the voice of the main verb. The content and organization of the messages remained the same.

The style of the samples were verified by pre-testing them on four business communication instructors. Each noticed differences in style between each group of passages. Furthermore, the instructors correctly classified the style of each of the messages.

TEST PROCEDURE

Two samples of 518 untrained students and 360 trained students were divided equally into groups of 259 and 180 students respectively. Students were given two documents to read, each one written in a different style and dealing with different content. As a result of this procedure, 259 untrained students evaluated the personal and forceful course description and the impersonal and passive description of a career in nursing. Another 259 evaluated the same messages written in the alternate style. Both groups of 180 trained students did the same.

All students received the same directions. They were asked to read each message as they would read any message they received. After they read each message, they were to turn it over and fill out a response sheet containing 18 semantic differential items on a seven-step Likert scale, (see Appendix B).

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Principle components factor analysis was used to discover which semantic differential items were related to each other. Factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 were submitted to both Varimax and oblique rotations. Since the same items loaded on the same factors regardless of the rotation, the results of the orthogonal rotation are discussed in the following section. Also, only those items with at least a $\pm$ .60 primary loading and with no secondary loading greater than $\pm$ .40 were analyzed.

INTERPRETATION OF FACTORS

Sample A: Course Description -- Personal and Forceful

The first factor represents affective traits: both untrained and trained students had an emotional response toward the writer (see Appendix C for a complete list of factor loadings). Untrained students perceived the writer as non-egotistical, sympathetic, and compromising while trained students saw him as sympathetic, sensitive, compromising, passive, and lax. Although the personal style of the message can partially account for this grouping of affective traits, the message's forceful, authoritarian tone raises questions about the grouping of several traits. It seems peculiar that untrained students perceived the writer as non-egotistical and trained students saw him as passive and lax. Because the message has an academic focus, both student groups may have

unconsciously slipped into the subordinate role that characterizes most student-teacher relationships. And as subordinates, the students may have responded in a way they believed was appropriate to their power position.

The second factor represents a rational or analytical grouping of traits. Untrained students perceived the writer as professional, organized, objective, polite, trustworthy, and respectful. This grouping indicates that they saw the writer as a forceful, clear-thinking decision maker. Trained students had almost the same image of the writer as untrained ones. They characterized him as personal, organized, and interesting. This response is largely an analytical perception of the writer and suggests that he is also seen by this group of readers as a straightforward professional.

A third factor resulted from the trained student responses. However, this factor accounted for less than 2% of the variance among the factors; consequently, it doesn't have much significance. Containing two traits -- non-egotistical and trustworthy, this factor seems more affective than analytical. Also, it represents a rather puzzling student response, particularly from trained students, since the style of the passage suggests a writer who is forceful, hard-driving, and analytical.

Sample B: Course Description -- Impersonal and Passive

Untrained readers had a somewhat schizophrenic image of the writer of this message. The first factor is composed of the following traits: passive, democratic, sensitive, lax, sympathetic, and compromising. This factor is difficult to name because three of its traits -- passive, lax, and compromising -- suggest a distant, non-aggressive image of the writer. This response was expected because of the impersonal, passive style of the message. However, three other traits -- sympathetic, democratic, and sensitive -- suggest that these readers had an emotional response toward the writer. This response is surprising since the style of the passage was designed to distance readers from the writer.

The second factor reflects a rational or analytical image of the writer. The traits that make up this factor -- professional, organized, and convincing -- are virtually the same ones that delineated the second factor in sample A, the forceful, personal version of this message. Since both secondary factors for the same message written in different styles are the same, difference in style had marginal impact on the readers' image of the writer.

Trained students' responses to the course description message were also somewhat schizophrenic. The first factor -- sympathetic, sensitive, and compromising -- reflects an emotional reaction to the writer. Virtually identical to the first factor extracted from the forceful, personal version of this message, this factor suggests that trained students' image of the writer was not influenced by a shift in style. However, the second factor, which accounts for about 6 percent of the variance, indicated that readers had a rational, analytical image of the writer. The combination of passive, professional, and organized traits implies that readers distanced themselves from the writer, yet at the

same time perceived him as a professional. This factor suggests that the passive, impersonal style of the message had an impact on the readers. The third factor -- impersonal and participative -- for the most part affirms this image.

Sample C: Nursing Description -- Personal and Forceful

Both untrained and trained students had similar responses toward this writer. The first three factors extracted from both student response groups suggest that they viewed the writer as a straight-forward, friendly professional (see Appendix C for a breakdown of each factor). This response complements the personal, forceful style of the message and indicates that the extensive use of personal pronouns and active constructions influenced readers.

However, the fourth factor extracted from the untrained students' responses was puzzling. These readers saw the writer as authoritarian and demanding, which runs counter to the responses found in the first three factors. Since this factor accounts for less than 2 percent of the variance explained by the factor grouping, its significance is questionable.

Sample D: Nursing Description -- Impersonal and Passive

Although the style of this message should distance readers from the writer, the first factor extracted from both student responses indicates the opposite occurred: students had a personal, emotional response toward the writer. Untrained students perceived him as personal, participative, sympathetic, and sensitive while trained students viewed him as friendly, trustworthy, sympathetic, sensitive, and convincing. This unexpected grouping of traits may be the result of the readers' positive attitude toward nursing. In short, the content of the nursing passage probably had a greater impact on the readers than the message's style.

The second factor extracted from both student samples was just as unexpected. Both factors reflect a measured, rational response toward the writer. Untrained students saw him as forceful, organized, and convincing while trained students characterized him as professional and organized. If the message's impersonal, passive style had the desired impact on these readers, they would have perceived him as distant and non-authoritarian.

However, readers perceived the writer of the impersonal, passive nursing message somewhat differently from the writer of the personal and forceful message. This difference may be the result of students' preconceptions about bureaucratic writing, which is primarily passive and impersonal. A bureaucratic style "sounds" formal and professional to many readers because they associate it with institutions -- banks, the courts, universities -- that command professional respect. Consequently, the readers of this message may have been influenced by what they believe a bureaucratic style represents rather than by the writer's manipulation of style.

CONCLUSIONS

Although both student groups' perception of the writer was somewhat influenced by the style of the message, shifts in style had little impact on their perception of the writer.

This result may have occurred for two reasons:

1) a message's content had greater impact on readers than its style.

2) readers had created a stereotype of the writer based on the messages' content.

Undoubtedly readers have already formed specific images of a writer based on his job, educational background, position in the company, and type of company he works for. The readers in this study probably assumed that the writer of the course description message was a professor. Consequently, their emotional, sympathetic response toward the writer may have been based on their southern upbringing and the resulting ivory-tower sentiments they have about academics -- professors by and large are perceived as a genteel, dignified lot in the South. However, the content of the message describes a rigorous report writing course that should improve these students' managerial competence. Both groups of students may have responded in an analytical, professional manner (the second factor extracted) because the practical aspects of the content virtually demanded that response.

Both groups of readers had basically the same response to the writer of the nursing messages. Since the writer of these messages is associated with a professor that is viewed by most people, it is not surprising that both groups of students had a positive, professional image of the writer. However, the content of the messages dealt with an emotional issue -- studying for a profession that involves caring for individuals' basic needs. Not surprisingly, one of the principle factors from each of the student responses was an emotional, sympathetic image of the writer. In short, the content of the message seemed to have greater impact on readers than its style.

Obviously, this study is merely a preliminary investigation. There are many other factors -- word choice, sentence type, organization, etc. -- that have an impact on style but were not manipulated in the sample messages. However, the results of this study do raise some important issues that management communication researchers need to ponder. For example, is the importance of style overrated? Often taught strategies such as "you viewpoint," "success consciousness," and "positive statement" may have little if any impact on the readers' perception of the writer. In many negative and persuasive situations the message's content may overpower attempts through manipulation of style to alter the reader's attitude toward the writer. Also, does a writer's position as a subordinate, superior, or equal mean that his style will automatically be perceived as more or less personal, more or less forceful? Does the fact that almost all messages are written within some sort of

hierarchical structure mean that readers have already made judgments about the writer that no amount of stylistic manipulation can change.

These questions address issues that the management communications field should not ignore. And researchers' willingness and ability to answer these questions will help determine whether the management communication field will continue to provide much-needed practical advice about writing on the job.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE DOCUMENTS

SAMPLE A

In Business Report Writing I will teach you to accurately assess your reader's needs, to sharpen your style, and to improve your organizational and analytical skills. To accomplish these goals, you will write five short reports, two in-class reports, one long report, and two exams.

I require that you attend all classes. If you are more than ten minutes late for class, I will consider you absent. I will drop you from the course if you miss four classes. If you miss a class, you are responsible for all material covered in that class. Contact a classmate about work you have missed.

You must complete all assignments to pass the course. I will not accept late reports. Also, I expect that each report you write is a finished product representing your best work; consequently, I will not allow you to rewrite a report for a better grade. Finally, I expect you to participate in class discussion; your participation will affect your final grade.

SAMPLE B

Students in Business Report Writing are taught to accurately assess their reader's needs, to sharpen their style, and to improve their organizational and analytical skills. To accomplish these goals, students are asked to write five short reports, two in-class reports, one long report, and two exams.

Attendance is required of all classes. Anyone who is more than ten minutes late for class is considered absent. A student will be dropped from the course if four classes are missed. If a class is missed, the student is responsible for all work covered in that class. A classmate should be contacted about missed work.

All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Late reports are not accepted. Also, it is expected that each report is a finished product representing one's best work; consequently, no one is allowed to rewrite a report for a better garde. Finally, class participation is expected; it will affect the final grade.

SAMPLE C

By studying nursing, you will learn to work with individuals and families so you can help them maintain or restore their health.

To insure that you receive proper training, the nursing college will provide you with an educational environment that will help you grow professionally. You will receive the on-the-job training necessary to give your patients the health care they deserve. You will also meet and work with health care professionals who have strong research skills.

You can obtain more information about the nursing program by calling the college.

SAMPLE D

Those studying nursing are taught to work with individuals and families to help maintain or restore their health.

To insure that those enrolled in the program receive proper training, an environment is provided that promotes students' professional growth. This is done through on-the-job training that teaches program participants to give patients the health care they deserve. Also, health care professionals who have strong research skills meet and work with program participants.

More information about the nursing program can be obtained by calling the college.

APPENDIX B

Please indicate your attitude toward the writer of this document by responding to the following questions. Place an X near the adjective that best characterizes your feelings toward the writer. Try to eliminate any preconceived ideas you have about writing, business writing, or English.

After reading this document, I feel that the writer is

Personal	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Impersonal
Forceful	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Passive
Interesting	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Dull
Professional	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Amateurish
Participative	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Authoritarian
Organized	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Disorganized
Egotistical	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Non-Egotistical
Friendly	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Distant
Polite	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Rude
Autocratic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Democratic
Trustworthy	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Untrustworthy
Demanding	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Lax
Objective	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Biased
Sympathetic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unsympathetic
Sensitive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Insensitive
Rigid	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Compromising
Convincing	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unconvincing
Respectful	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Disrespectful

APPENDIX C

UNTRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE A FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
V1	.05629	-.04021
V2	-.02367	-.00458
V3	.04581	.33312
V4	-.09600	.70785
V5	.46356	.04163
V6	-.28637	.64490
V7	-.59913	-.27079
V8	.43104	.33034
V9	.32786	.68583
V11	-.58791	-.03012
V12	.19316	.59732
V13	-.54219	.12859
V14	.38667	.52108
V15	.64342	.22690
V16	.54653	.34628
V17	-.70091	.18392
V18	-.24743	.31151
V19	.25419	.69077

FACTOR I	FACTOR II
Non-Egotistical	Professional
Sympathetic	Organized
Compromising	Polite
	Trustworthy
	Respectful

TRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE A FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
V1	.31589	.68800	-.18888
V2	-.64539	.29548	.07895
V3	.11763	.65549	.37411
V4	-.06902	.34934	-.08192
V5	.60022	.00169	.07967
V6	-.24724	.61780	.13454
V7	-.33903	.03109	-.71028
V8	.58601	.31778	.49790
V9	.41597	.17058	.46826
V11	-.55549	.17451	-.33431
V12	.00833	.16814	.69400
V13	-.68804	.09669	-.23152
V14	.12483	-.18508	-.01825
V15	.72374	.06808	.07409
V16	.70677	.22998	.17136
V17	-.78537	-.15697	-.09258
V18	-.25138	.38752	.31380
V19	.22680	.41988	.15944

FACTOR I	FACTOR II	FACTOR II
Sympathetic	Personal	Non-Egotistical
Sensitive	Organized	Trustworthy
Compromising		
Weak		
Lax		

UNTRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE B FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
V1	.25512	-.18622
V2	-.77553	.33845
V3	.37174	.38112
V4	-.19229	.73626
V5	.53794	-.11349
V6	-.30772	.69018
V7	-.59730	.03780
V8	.67254	-.02923
V9	.66880	.25555
V11	-.65239	.13172
V12	.07218	.43072
V13	-.84429	.22857
V14	.06791	.13286
V15	.82899	-.05824
V16	.84455	.01637
V17	-.81383	.21152
V18	-.25381	.61988
V19	.44546	.58363

FACTOR I	FACTOR II
Passive	Professional
Democratic	Organized
Lax	Convincing
Sympathetic	Respectful
Sensitive	
Compromising	

TRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE B FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3
V1	.13790	.05819	-.73685
V2	-.16172	-.76878	-.09227
V3	.20852	.44756	.51240
V4	-.04480	.59761	.10089
V5	.05418	-.16103	.77230
V6	.11387	.57155	-.15298
V7	-.57129	.12315	.02961
V8	.47584	-.05257	.54794
V9	.41191	-.06799	.37195
V11	-.31719	.37829	-.30084
V12	.13691	.56220	.21016
V13	-.56522	.47071	-.10605
V14	.17020	-.06471	.01060
V15	.76216	.10581	.12535
V16	.80819	.15180	.18661
V17	-.60066	.15519	-.28833
V18	-.06301	.29128	-.08558
V19	.22354	.12354	.17384

FACTOR I	FACTOR II	FACTOR III
Sympathetic	Forceful	Personal
Sensitive	Professional	Participative
Compromising	Organized	

UNTRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE C FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4
V1	.06243	.76689	.09316	-.10684
V2	.35892	.54059	-.23336	.44059
V3	.56472	.46741	.16049	.01868
V4	.78950	.11429	-.03432	.02639
V5	.21925	.20801	-.10032	-.67377
V6	.82580	.05674	.01395	.02377
V7	.13155	-.06337	-.66849	.08641
V8	.3884	61962	.26001	-.33654
V9	.35356	.30422	.56447	-.16217
V11	-.10688	-.15054	-.66479	.16024
V12	.46084	.16391	.60471	.20409
V13	.29267	.01320	-.12170	.71577
V14	43589	-.11273	.34820	-.19361
V15	-.00555	.61971	.41067	-.32543
V16	.16280	.61785	.34128	-.42651
V17	-.02204	-.23662	-.30451	.63745
V18	.66756	.51279	.18789	.14617
V19	.53659	.26512	.45232	-.07455

FACTOR I	FACTOR II	FACTOR III	FACTOR IV
Professional	Personal	Non-Egotistical	Authoritarian
Organized	Friendly	Democratic	Demanding

TRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE C FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2	FACTOR 3	FACTOR 4
V1	.28971	.52647	.20087	.49974
V2	.79237	-.11798	.02634	.03733
V3	.68687	.40955	.19711	.29418
V4	.82857	.12980	.19587	.08205
V5	.10729	.26428	.02034	.74868
V6	.67635	.21501	.18372	-.15517
V7	.19834	-.58203	-.09745	-.09187
V8	.22407	.79012	.40956	.23121
V9	.17291	.75201	.40956	.23121
V11	.12019	-.11084	-.06085	-.72021
V12	.11016	.41767	.64337	.08060
V13	.52010	-.29104	-.13520	-.21722
V14	.17702	.12641	.72461	-.18967
V15	.07331	.09696	.72700	.38673
V16	.11521	.30694	.69934	.41168
V17	.29748	-.02297	-.48303	-.59230
V18	.60762	.51336	.18683	-.59230
V19	.25030	.57250	.56335	.06519

FACTOR I	FACTOR II	FACTOR III	FACTOR IV
Forceful	Non-Egotistical	Objective	Participative
Professional	Friendly	Sympathetic	Democratic
Organized	Polite		

UNTRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE D FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
V1	.80230	.21924
V2	.10011	.74584
V3	.60492	.54643
V4	.19850	.83776
V5	.70438	.10360
V6	.16231	.76028
V7	-.22917	.11314
V8	.82890	.27319
V9	.69129	.27549
V11	-.49708	.05103
V12	.47109	.36763
V13	-.16492	.74095
V14	.10669	.32053
V15	.82884	.07167
V16	.83098	.12818
V17	-.64692	.27518
V18	.29760	.74318
V19	.43383	.48962

FACTOR I	FACTOR II
Personal	Forceful
Participative	Organized
Sympathetic	Convincing
Sensitive	

TRAINED STUDENTS

SAMPLE D FACTOR LOADINGS

VARIMAX ROTATION

	FACTOR 1	FACTOR 2
V1	.44924	.22142
V2	.37954	.07668
V3	.52810	.34753
V4	.10652	.69768
V5	.02033	.13722
V6	.07664	.77859
V7	-.00144	-.10219
V8	.61764	.20562
V9	.18777	.52422
V11	-.17962	.13220
V12	.76241	.12092
V13	-.04501	-.01713
V14	-.08642	.42099
V15	.74641	-.13687
V16	.66350	-.07340
V17	.01258	.10890
V18	.69855	.21368
V19	.10628	.02049

FACTOR I	FACTOR II
Friendly	Professional
Trustworthy	Organized
Sympathetic	
Sensitive	
Convincing	

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[3] Milic, pp. 31-33.

A PRELIMINARY STUDY OF THE EFFECTS ON READER BEHAVIOR OF CHANGES IN THE ORDER OF MATERIAL PRESENTED: A "DISCUSSION PAPER"

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ABSTRACT

To study the effects of changes in the organization of written material, two experiments were conducted. Student respondents were asked to make decisions on the buying and selling of stock in a corporation, depending upon the information contained in an "official company statement." Two versions of the statement were prepared, one "direct" (with the most important information in the beginning, followed by "background" information) and the other "indirect" (with the background information first and the most important information at the end).

The first experiment showed no statistically significant differences in responses to the two versions. A second experiment, using the same facts but written in an easier-to-read style, also showed no significant differences, though there appeared to be a tendency toward the "direct" version having more influence. There were significantly different levels of response in the second experiment when various categories of "risk-taking" were analyzed, however. It appears that the "direct" version persuaded more respondents to retain their stock than did the "indirect" form.

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

As part of the research activity of the business writing faculty of a southern university, the writer and a colleague decided to test some basic tenets of business writing pedagogy.

The first concept chosen for study was "organization of ideas," especially the precept that important ideas should appear at the beginning of business reports and other writing rather than at the end (as "conclusions").

A study of "bottom-line writing" conducted by the two faculty members produced mixed results when a reader comprehension test was given to the student participants. The author decided to run another set of experiments on organization that would call for each reader to

make choices rather than demonstrate learning or recall.

Instrument Used

In the experiments the "situation" was presented to each reader* as the top part of a page describing a so-called "investment decision":

INVESTMENT DECISION

> You are an investment counselor and trust officer in a bank. You have control over many individual investment accounts, and you are analyzing one to see if it is properly balanced. The client, Mrs. X, is a widow in her early 70's and she lives off the income from her $250,000 investment portfolio.
>
> Nearly all of it is in blue-chip equities (that pay good dividends) and top-rated bonds with good yields. However, she and you have decided that 5% of her holdings should be in growth stocks (looking to the future and hoping for at least capital appreciation) and 5% in speculative stocks.
>
> Fourteen months ago you bought for Mrs. X 100 shares of Quali-Dyn Tech stock at 17½. You saw this as a growth opportunity. The stock is quoted on the AMEX today as 13 3/8 and has been as low as 12 in the past two weeks. All indications are that it could drop to 10 or less, depending upon market reaction to company statements. Today you see the following official statement from Q-DT's chairman:

The situation was immediately followed by the two paragraphs listed below. Half of those persons tested received the statement exactly as it appears below; this was the "indirect" version. The other half received a form with the paragraphs reversed; this was the "direct" version.

> "There has been speculation in the business press in recent weeks concerning the possibility of the Board of Directors of Q-DT forcing a change in operating management as a result of lower-than-expected earnings for the last quarter of the fiscal year and for the year as a whole and the concomitant necessity to pass a dividend. There have also been allegations that negotiations with the Silicon Workers Union have not been immediately viable and that it might not be possible to reach an accord with the union before the labor contract terminates at the end of the month. It is understood that certain union officials have stated that union members would not report for work if a contract should not be negotiated by that time."

* All persons tested were junior- or senior-level students in business writing classes.

"The Chairman of the Board has been authorized by the Board to make a statement to all concerned that the Board fully supports and has complete confidence in the president and his team of executives. While the income for either the last quarter or the entire fiscal year has not achieved anticipated levels, all indications are that cost-cutting procedures already initiated and a more vigorous marketing effort will remedy the situation and allow for resumption of dividend payments in the future. The Chairman is also authorized to disclose that, in the opinion of management, negotiations with the Silicon Workers Union are proceeding at an acceptable pace and that chances are very good for settlement well before indicated deadlines."*

The "indirect" version was so termed because the first paragraph, in effect, set the stage and gave background. It presented the reasons for the actions announced in the second paragraph (the actions being the support of the Board for management, the announcement of cost-cutting, new marketing efforts, etc.) The design concept here was that this is the traditional way to organize thought: reasoning followed by conclusions.

However, the "direct" version gave the reader the actions first and the paragraph containing the reasons came second. This was the "bottom-line" approach, the non-traditional organization. In this organizational mode, the Board announces its support of management and covers the other important points "up front." Its reasoning then becomes a follow-up or background.

Approximately half of each class participating in the study received the indirect version; the other half got the direct form. Both versions were passed out face up and students were asked to read the "situation statement" and the "official statement from the Board." Students were then told that questions about the situation, the statement, or technical terms would be answered verbally. (None was asked in any class.)

Students were then asked to read all of the questions printed on the back of the form and then answer as they saw fit. They were also told that they could refer back to the statement or situation description as they wished. There was no time limit on the answers, but nearly all finished and handed in their papers in three or four minutes. These were the questions:

1. Would you sell the Q-DT shares you have now and post a capital loss?
   _____ yes ____no

---

*[Note: these paragraphs were deliberately written in a formal style. The Gunning Fog Index for the two paragraphs is 22.4.]

2. Would you keep the shares but (mentally, at least) move them from the "growth" group in Mrs. X's portfolio to the "speculation" category?
_____ yes _____no

3. Would you take advantage of the present low price and buy more Q-DT stock as a speculation fling for Mrs. X?
_____ yes _____ no

4. If you answered "yes" to question number 3, how much stock would you buy?
_____ 50 shares
_____ 100 shares
_____ more than 100 shares

Students were asked to be sure to answer Questions 1 and 3 ("would you sell" and "would you buy"). Question 2 and 4, to a great extent, depend upon responses to 1 and 3, so no special instructions were given regarding them. All respondents did answer Questions 1 and 3.

HYPOTHESES AND RESULTS

Since the intent of the experiment was to test the effect of changes in the organization of material upon reader behavior ("behavior," that is, in the form of choices made in buying or selling stock), the basic hypothesis was the traditional null hypothesis: changes in organization would have no significant effect on behavior.

The total experiment was seen by the writer as a "persuasion situation." It was felt that each respondent was in a position to be influenced by the "official company statement." If the respondent were convinced that

1. top management truly had the support of the Board,
2. the company was controlling its costs and increasing its sales, and
3. the labor contract would be settled without a strike,

then the respondent would be favorably inclined toward the company. He or she would be apt to at least hold onto the stock already owned. If fully persuaded, the respondent would not only hold his or her stock but buy more.

Another assumption (rather than a hypothesis) was that each class would contain about the same proportion of "risk takers." It was believed that if each version of the instrument were given out randomly to half of each class, approximately the same percentage of high-, medium-, and low-risk takers would be included in each segment. A high-risk taker, for example, would be a respondent who would not

only keep present stock but buy more. (An analysis of risk-taker performance follows the discussion of direct results of organization changes.)

Table 1 shows the results of the initial experiment. Direct inspection will show that, in responding to each of the three principal questions ("would you sell," "would you switch," and "would you buy"), the students using each version of the company statement had virtually the same percentage of response. For example, in Question 1, 41% of respondents to the direct version said they would sell; 38% of those who had the indirect version had the same response.

In Question 3, 18% of those with the direct form said they would buy more stock; 19% of those with the indirect version said they would buy.

TABLE 1

Responses to Original "Investment Decision" Experiment

	Direct Version				Indirect Version			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Question 1 Would you sell?	9	(41%)	13	(59%)	10	(38%)	16	(62%)
Question 2 Would you switch?	14	(70%)	6	(30%)	13	(62%)	8	(38%)
Question 3 Would you buy?	4	(18%)	18	(82%)	5	(19%)	21	(81%)

To be doubly sure that there were no significant differences among the responses to the two forms, a X^2 analysis was made of each set of relationships. There were no significant differences found at or beyond the .05 level of confidence, so the null hypothesis could not be rejected; in this case changing the order of organization had no effect.

RE-EXAMINATION AND SECOND EXPERIMENT

In a footnote above it is noted that the "official company statement" was written in a highly formal style and that its Gunning Fox Index was 22.4 (a reading level beyond graduate education levels). There are 246 words in the six sentences and two paragraphs.

It was postulated that this stylistic factor may have interfered with the sense of the statement more than the change in organization of ideas. It was felt appropriate to replicate the experiment, but with a change in writing style.

A second experiment, utilizing a different set of student respondents, was established. In this new effort, the official company statement was rewritten. Care was taken to express the same ideas and opinions, in the same order, that were in the original. However, this time the verbiage and difficult words were reduced to a minimum. The new "official statement" had 173 words expressed in 11 independent clauses and four paragraphs. [The Gunning Fox Index is 9.48 (approximately a ninth-grade readinglevel).]

> "The press has been filled with rumors that the Board of Directors of Q-DT might make management changes. Apparently these rumors started when our income for the fiscal year -- and the last quarter -- did not reach the levels we had expected and we had to pass our regular dividend.
>
> "There have also been rumors that our talks with the Silicon Workers Union were deadlocked, that we might not work out a contract by the end of the month, and that we might face a strike. Not one of these rumors is justified.
>
> "The Board of Directors of Q-DT fully backs the president and his management team. Income for the year (or the last quarter) may not have been as high as we hoped it would be, but that will change. Management has already cut production costs and started a vigorous marketing campaign. So we hope to start paying dividends again soon.
>
> "We also believe that we can soon come to an agreement with union representatives on a contract that is fair to everybody."

The passage above is the indirect version. The direct version was identical but with the third and fourth paragraphs preceding the first and second.

There were no other changes made in the original experiment. The description of the "situation" remained exactly the same as in the first experiment, as did the questions. Classes of approximately the same size as in the first experiment were polled, and the same instructions were given to the students.

Table 2 indicates that some changes might have occurred. While 35% of those who had the indirect version decided to sell their stock (Question 1), only 13% of those responding to the direct version would sell. This seems to indicate that the "official company statement" in its direct form persuaded more respondents to support the company and hold their stock.

TABLE 2

Responses to Second "Investment Decision" Experiment

	Direct Version				Indirect Version			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Question 1 Would you sell?	13	(13%)	21	(87%)	7	(35%)	13	(65%)
Question 2 Would you switch?	19	(83%)	4	(17%)	15	(83%)	3	(17%)
Question 3 Would you buy?	5	(21%)	19	(79%)	3	(15%)	17	(85%)

However, care must be taken in reaching conclusions on the basis of these data. While there appears to be a tendency toward the persuasiveness of the direct version, standard X^2 analysis is not significant at the .05 level. The X^2 utilizing the responses to Question 1 comes to 3.13 and a X^2 of 3.84 is required for significance at the .05 level. Moreover, if the Yates Correction is used (which is necessary when samples are small), the X^2 comes to 1.98.

The responses to Questions 2 and 3 in the second experiment showed considerable agreement between the two versions, as Table 2 indicates. There was nothing approaching statistical significance among the responses to these two questions.

So it would appear that the second experiment essentially produced the same results as the first: no difference between the direct version and the indirect version.

Table 3 shows the responses to both experiments, with responses to each version juxtaposed.

TABLE 3

Total Responses to Both "Investment Decision" Experiments
(comparing direct and indirect versions)

	Expt. 1 - Direct				Expt. 2 - Direct			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Question 1 Would you sell?	9	(41%)	13	(59%)	3	(13%)	21	(87%)
Question 2 Would you switch?	14	(70%)	6	(30%)	19	(83%)	4	(17%)
Question 3 Would you buy?	4	(18%)	18	(82%)	5	(21%)	19	(79%)

	Expt. 1 - Indirect				Expt. 2 - Indirect			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Question 1 Would you sell?	10	(38%)	16	(62%)	7	(35%)	13	(65%)
Question 2 Would you switch?	13	(62%)	8	(38%)	15	(83%)	3	(17%)
Question 3 Would you buy?	5	(19%)	21	(81%)	3	(15%)	17	(85%)

First examination of Table 3 seems to show that the style change in Experiment 2 had an effect on responses to Question 1 in the direct versions. While 41% of those with the direct version in Experiment 1 would sell their stock, only 13% of their counterparts in the second experiment would sell. This level of response approaches statistical significance. The X^2 of these responses comes to 3.44 when Yates' Correction is employed, and significance at the .05 level would be achieved with a X^2 of 3.84 with one degree of freedom. (Of course, the null hypothesis can not be rejected; the X^2 is not significant at .05.)

However, there seems to be some evidence here that, with a more readable style, those who received the direct version of the official statement were more willing to hold their stock than were those who got the indirect version.

RISK-TAKER ANALYSIS

It was decided to place each respondent into one of four "risk groups," as follows:

Group A - High Risk. Would not sell present stock; would buy more.
Group B - Medium Risk. Would not sell present stock; would not buy more.
Group C - Low Risk. Would sell present stock; would buy more.
Group D - Indeterminate Risk. Would not sell present stock; would buy more.

Table 4 shows the results of a special tabulation made of the responses to both experiments. If one reads down the two columns concerning Experiment 1, a unanimity can be seen. For instance, 50% of the "indirect respondents" are in Group B and 30% of them are in Group C. These numbers can be compared to the Groups B and C "direct respondents": 45% and 36%, respectively.

TABLE 4

Comparison of "Risk Group" Choices

	Expt. 1		Expt. 2		
	Indir. # %	Direct # %	Indir. # %	Direct # %	(Row totals & percentages)
Group A (High Risk)	3 15% 20%	3 14% 20%	5 19% 34%	4 17% 26%	15 100%
Group B (Medium Risk)	10 50% 21%	10 45% 21%	11 42% 23%	17 71% 35%	48 100%
Group C (Low Risk)	6 30% 24%	8 36% 32%	9 35% 36%	2 8% 8%	25 100%
Group D (Indeterm.)	1 5% 25%	1 5% 25%	1 4% 25%	1 4% 25%	4 100%
	20 100%	22 100%	26 100%	24 100%	

However, Table 4 also shows that there is a different set of relationships between Groups B and C in Experiment 2. While 42% of the "indirect respondents" are in medium-risk Group B, 71% of the "direct respondents" are in B.

There is also a disparity in the results of the second experiment among those in Group C, the low-risk category. While 35% of

those who read the indirect official company statement could be categorized as "low risk," only 8% of those in the "direct" group could be so classified.

Computations of X^2 that compare the disparities between Groups B and C in the second experiment result in 4.15 (significant beyond .05 but short of significance at .02).

The shift from Low Risk to Medium Risk among the "direct respondents" seems to be attributable to the organization of the material presented. Significantly more persons were persuaded to hold their stock among the "direct" group in the second experiment. However, there was no concomitant shift in Experiment 1.

So there was a significant shift in risk-taking categories in the "direct" category in the second experiment and no real change between "direct" and "indirect" in the first. The change in writing style may have been a factor.

CONCLUSIONS

This admittedly "preliminary" study showed no direct, statistically significant differences in reader behavior that could be attributed immediately to changes in the organization of information read by the respondents. However, there were data that indicated a tendency toward a "direct" organization of material having more effect than an indirect approach.

This was especially true when respondents were categorized into "risk-taker" groups. However, it must be noted that a change in style could well have been a factor in the second experiment.

Another factor that might have been operative was the length of the two passages used in the study. It could be postulated that in such a short bit of reading the reader could easily edit the material mentally and put it into an order comfortable to him or her.

The writer plans to conduct in the next year an experiment that will employ the same situation and reader choices but a longer and more complicated "official company statement." The instrument will be given to a larger number of students, thus avoiding some of the statistical problems faced in the preliminary study. A report covering the results of the more extensive study will be prepared. Comments on the research design, methodology, data analysis, etc. of the preliminary study described above would be welcomed.

PROMOTING VERTICAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH SURVEY FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the use of Survey Feedback as a means of diagnosing and solving vertical communication problems in organizations, and examines its merits as an exemplar or vertical communication. A recent case study of Survey Feedback in a nonprofit organization serves as the context for the discussion.

INTRODUCTION

When Chester Barnard stated that "the first function of the executive is to develop and maintain a system of communication" [1, p. 226], he simultaneously articulated the central focus of an entire school of managerial thought and practice, as well as provided one of the earliest theoretical statements by a manager linking successful executive behavior with communication practices. Since that time, numerous and credible writers have echoed Barnard's thinking in asserting that successful management and effective organizations depend critically on communication and symbolic behavior [cf. 8; 10; 11; 13].

Especially important in the functioning of the modern organization are those formal and informal mechanisms that are designed to promote vertical communication--downward and upward communication. As one of the major means by which organizations accomplish such essential activities as decision making, planning, control, and innovation (among others), vertical communication affects a multitude of important organizational outcomes. In the recent and very popular book, In Search of Excellence, for example, Peters and Waterman [10] cite the remarkable degree and intensity of vertical communication (and communication in general) as a distinguishing feature of America's so-called "excellent" companies. And there is abundant additional evidence supporting the general proposition that high quality vertical communication processes and mechanisms relate importantly to various organizational performance and employee satisfaction measures [3; 4; 6; 7; 12; 14; 15].

In view of the pivotal role that vertical communication plays in influencing organizational effectiveness, there would seem to be no small need to examine and explore various means of diagnosing and addressing

vertical communication difficulties in organizations. Toward that end, the present paper describes a survey feedback project completed recently by the author, the intent of which was to diagnose and address communication problems in general, and vertical communication problems in particular, in the context of a relatively small (300 member) nonprofit organization. The case study presented here should be informative and applicable for practitioners contemplating similar investigative projects in their own organizations, and should also perhaps prove useful to scholars or consultants whose work might afford them opportunities to employ some of the methods, tactics, or interventions described here.

SURVEY FEEDBACK AT SOUTHWEST EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Due to the sensitivity of certain data that were gathered in the course of the project, the name of the organization and names of principal organizational members have been disguised. The organization is nonprofit and is associated with a Department of Education agency of a Southwest state. It employs approximately 300 people who work in six divisions. Several of these divisions have the primary responsibility of developing higher educational programs to serve the needs of the state, while the remaining divisions are primarily administrative. There are essentially three layers of management in the organization: the topmost position is that of the Agency Administrator, held by Robert Samuelson. The remainder of top management consists of the six Division Administrators. Middle management in the organization is made up of Program Administrators, who oversee the work of staff professionals and other salaried employees. Below the Program Administrators are first-line supervisors, who direct the work of the organization's hourly employees.

CONDUCTING THE SURVEY FEEDBACK PROJECT

The Survey Feedback Project was initiated at Southwest Educational Services (SES) in the summer of 1983 when Michael Harmon, the Agency's Director of Communications contacted the present author about the feasibility of conducting a "communication audit" of SES. A subsequent meeting with the Executive Directors (top management) of the organization was held to (1) assess their support of such a project and (2) to enlist their assistance and involvement in its planning. It was agreed that in view of their concerns about employee perceptions of communication processes at SES, a survey feedback would afford the most flexible and informative method of diagnosing and addressing communication issues in the organization. While many different models of the survey feedback process exist [cf. 2; 5; 9], the sequence of events for the survey feedback at SES was organized as follows: (1) Introduction of the project to SES employees; (2) Preliminary data gathering and survey design; (3) Survey administration; (4) Feedback sessions; (5) Action planning; (6) Actions; and (7) Follow-up.

Phase 1: Introducing the Project

In September of 1983, a general staff meeting of all SES employees was held, at which time Samuelson (the Agency Administrator) expressed his interest in the survey feedback project as a means of systematically delineating a number of communication issues or concerns that had, prior to that time, been articulated only informally--but nevertheless very vocally--among employees. At this meeting the present author described the diagnostic and problem-solving intent and general procedures of such an undertaking, and entertained questions about it from the employees.

Phase 2: Diagnostic Interviews

Phase two of the project consisted of conducting anonymous, tape-recorded diagnostic interviews among a sample of (30) employees. These interviews each lasted approximately thirty minutes to one hour, and sought responses to four general questions: (1) What do you want to learn (or want administrators to hear) about communication processes at SES from this project? (2) If you could ask the members of SES any five questions about communication effectiveness here, what would those questions be? (3) What are the major communication strengths of SES? (4) What are the major communication weaknesses of SES?

The importance and utility of this phase, and of this kind of questioning, is threefold: First, it actively involves employees from all organizational levels in the construction of the final survey instrument. Presumably such participation can enhance the perceived legitimacy and credibility of the project among employees. A second benefit of this method is that the resulting survey questions, created on the basis of interview commentary, ostensibly address many of the most important communication issues for that particular organization, as defined by its own members. Thus, this method "personalizes" the items of a survey to a given organization. A final use of the diagnostic interviews is that they provide qualitative responses, in the form of representative viewpoints, that can be later fed back to the organization in conjunction with the quantitative survey data. In other words, the interview commentary often assists organizational members in interpreting the quantitative survey results; it gives further expression to the quantitative data.

Once the diagnostic interviews were completed, the interview tapes were content analyzed by the author for common themes, concerns, and expressions of interest that would be suitable for the construction of survey questions. The resulting topics were initially cast in the form of survey questions by the author and then submitted for review to a committee consisting of top and middle-level SES managers. These individuals contributed suggestions to help clarify or modify specific questions. The final version of the survey consisted of 158 items covering a wide range of communication phenomena at SES. (Many of the items were purposely phrased to be redundant with other items so that reliable subscales within the larger survey could be created and used for statistical analyses. Had there been no interest in generating these

subscales, the final survey perhaps could have been as abbreviated as approximately 45 items.) Sample questions from the final survey instrument are presented in Exhibit 1.

EXHIBIT 1

SAMPLE SURVEY ITEMS

1. How do you feel about the opportunity for access to higher management? (Indicate one)
2. Do you think the information from this survey will be used constructively by management? (Indicate one)
3. In my division, we feel part of a team that works together.
4. The divisions or departments here cooperate well with each other in the interest of SES as a whole.
5. The promotion and career opportunities available in SES are being clearly communicated to me.
6. Management acts as if it takes a genuine interest in the welfare of me as an employee of SES.
7. I feel that my work makes a direct contribution to the success of SES.
8. All in all, SES is an efficiently managed, well-run organization.
9. I feel that I have sufficient opportunity to express my opinions about SES policy before it is formulated.
10. I know enough about what is going on in the rest of SES to function effectively in my job.
11. I know enough about what is going on in the rest of SES to feel a part of the organization.
12. I feel that the management of SES wants to hear the ideas and concerns of those at lower levels.
13. I feel that the management of SES is responsive to the ideas and concerns of those at lower levels.
14. I am confident that communication "up the line" gets to its intended destination, without being "blocked."
15. I am confident that communication "down the line" gets to its intended destination, without being "blocked."
16. People here at SES share information across divisional lines.
17. I trust top management.
18. There is adequate information from top management concerning the goals and objectives of SES.
19. The level of interdepartmental trust here in SES is good.
20. I have a sense of "belonging" in this organization.
21. The administrative communication processes in SES are effective.
22. I trust the administrative communications in SES.

Phase 3: Survey Administration

The final survey was administered to all SES employees in November, 1983.

Phase 4: Feedback Sessions

After the survey data had been analyzed and the interview data organized and summarized, a full descriptive report was presented initially to the Executive Directors and middle managers of SES. These individuals were given the rather lengthy (50 single-spaced pages) full report approximately two weeks prior to an initial diagnostic feedback session (to be attended by the Executive Directors and middle managers), and were charged with the responsibility of formulating their own interpretations of the data for that session. The purpose of this first diagnostic session was to achieve some consensus among the managers regarding major communication issues emerging from the project (i.e., survey and interview) data. From this and a second session came the consensus of opinion among the managers that the major communication issues at SES revolved around the following: (1) Downward Communication; in particular employees expressed great concern for a perceived paucity of timely downward communication on a variety of organizational topics, particularly from top and middle management; (2) Upward Communication; employees seemed very skeptical regarding management's (and particularly top management's) receptivity and responsiveness to upward communication; another aspect of this doubt was reflected in overwhelmingly negative opinions about the accessibility of top management, about the opportunity for input to decision making, and even about the question of whether respondents thought that top management would make constructive use of the survey results; (3) Trust; almost one-half of the organization's employees indicated little trust in management's (particularly top management's) communicative efforts; (4) Dissatisfaction; respondents expressed dissatisfaction with a number of general communication-related practices at SES, such as the communication of promotion and career opportunities within the organization, and the performance appraisal process at SES, among other issues.

A second type of feedback involved presenting the project results, in condensed form, to the entire organization. This was done in a two-stage process. First, an eight page descriptive summary of results was given to all SES employees. Second, a general feedback session was held for all organizational employees who could attend. At this session the author first delivered a descriptive presentation corresponding to the report possessed by each employee. After this presentation and a brief question-answer session between the author and the employees, the large group of employees broke up into approximately twelve smaller groups. The objectives for each group were to discuss the results amongst group members and to devise, striving for consensus with the help of group facilitators, diagnostic as well as possible solution statements about communication problems at SES. At the conclusion of these group deliberations, the large group reconvened and summary reports and recommendations from each group were presented orally and compiled. Because of time limitations at this session, and the great amount of information generated by the groups, the group reports and recommendations were later transcribed and published in the SES Newsletter, made available to every employee.

The method of feedback described above accomplished several important goals. First, it provided every interested SES employee the opportunity to clarify and discuss the project results--with peers, subordinates, and superiors. Second, it provided employees a means by which to offer their

own interpretations of the data, and more importantly, to suggest and to own solutions to the problems observed. This involvement and ownership holds critical implications for implementing any organizational changes undertaken as a result of such a survey project. In fact, although the diagnostic statements generated by employees added very little to the ones developed by middle and upper managers in the earlier feedback session, several of the solutions proposed by employees proved especially helpful, as the next section describes.

Phases 5 and 6: Action Plans and Action

Essentially the ultimate aim of survey feedback is to provide a base of information from which to take constructive action. In the case of SES, a great number of formal action plans and specific actions grew directly out of the survey project. Some of these are currently awaiting implementation, while others have, in effect, already been implemented and institutionalized.

Given the relatively short time since the feedback and action planning sessions at SES took place (Winter-Spring, 1984), the organization has made commendable progress in responding to the major issues emerging from the survey project. For example, a number of immediate steps have been taken to address some of the concerns with "downward communication." Each week, the organization now issues a calendar of events entitled, "This Week at SES," to keep all employees abreast of key organizational events. In April, SES conducted an organization-wide "orientation day" for all employees, new and old. This was in direct response to the expressed concern among employees to be updated on the overall organization of SES and its programs and facilities. In conjunction with this endeavor, SES published for all employees a "Guide to SES Programs," describing what each divisional unit does. Additionally, as a direct result of the survey, SES has undertaken a revision and updating of its procedures and policies manual. When that manual is completed in the Fall of 1984 or the Winter of 1985, there are plans to hold a general staff meeting for all employees to discuss its contents. Other actions that have been taken to promote and improve vertical communication in general at SES include: (1) the establishment of annual awards to recognize and reward outstanding performance and service at SES; (2) off-site staff retreats designed to encourage the informal exchange of information among all SES employees; (3) on-site "brown bag" buzz sessions, at which participants from different divisions (and administrative levels) have the opportunity to informally discuss SES and divisional matters of interest; and (4) weekly small group staff meetings involving SES top management (particularly Samuelson) and lower level administrators, with the purpose being to promote two-way exchange of information.

Along related lines, SES top management has adopted several, perhaps more personalized, approaches to improving vertical communication. One such approach is the column written by Robert Samuelson, the Agency Administrator, that now appears regularly in the SES Newsletter. And there are plans to use his column to implement a "Write to Know" program, in which questions submitted by employees about SES can be answered by Samuelson either confidentially or published in the column.

Furthermore, in July of 1984, as a result of suggestions arising from the employee feedback session mentioned earlier, Samuelson delivered to the entire organization the first of what will be a semi-annual or annual "State of SES" presentation and report, designed to "take stock of where we are, examine our goals and directions, and look at specific objectives for the future." Finally, top management in general, and Samuelson in particular, has expressed great interest in establishing closer contact with employees through "open door" policies and through what Peters and Waterman [10] simply call "management by wandering around." Moreover, top management wants to increase its visibility and, most of all, its accessibility to SES employees.

These are some of the actions and plans that developed directly from the survey feedback project. Others will take more time to accomplish, such as the goal of changing the performance appraisal system at SES, and the general objective of instilling more confidence among SES employees in the sincerity of top management's communicative efforts. Nevertheless, the organization has made great strides toward improving its vertical communication, and there is every reason to expect this progress to continue as additional action plans are implemented.

Phase 7: Follow-up

In order to promote the follow-through on action plans, it is generally a good idea to schedule a formal follow-up examination of the actions that have been planned and taken as a result of the survey feedback project. Specific follow-up activities, as well as their timing, of course depend largely on the nature of actions planned. In the case of SES, follow-up took a number of different and informative forms. First, in July of 1984--approximately eight months after the survey at SES--the author interviewed for a second time several of the employees who participated in the original diagnostic interviews. The purpose here was simply to ascertain their observations and evaluations of changes that had been made or which were in the works as a result of the survey. As a second type of follow-up, in August of 1984 the author surveyed approximately half of those SES members who had completed the first survey, using twenty items from the original instrument that were associated with the major communication issues identified there. In this way it was possible to directly compare certain numeric data from the two administrations. Not surprisingly, the second, follow-up survey suggested, as did the interview data, that employees sensed improvement in vertical communication processes and mechanisms at SES. And perhaps most important, employees indicated both a greater degree of confidence that management (and particularly top management) is sincere in its attempts to improve communication, and great interest in making the attempts successful. Moreover, at this writing the prospects for continued improvement at SES look good, given the organization's demonstrated commitment to fulfilling the intent of the survey feedback project.

IMPLICATIONS: PROMOTING VERTICAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH SURVEY FEEDBACK

This paper has described the use of survey feedback as a means of diagnosing and addressing communication difficulties in organizations. There seem to be a number of real strengths recommending its use as a diagnostic device. First, it engages the diagnostic skills and opinions of the very people who "live" with an organization's day-to-day communication problems. And aside from any specific pre-formulated questions an investigator might bring to the survey project, the employees themselves can participate in creating many of the most incisive and insightful questions for use in the survey. Answers, after all, are largely a product of the particular questions asked, and this method helps avoid the imposition of "pet" investigative or theoretical frameworks on the gathering of diagnostic data. In no small way do the organizational members determine what questions are worth asking.

A related strength of survey feedback seems to be its ability to elicit willingness and commitment among participants to try to make the process work. Because it relies at several points on the active involvement of employees, and because it places a number of interpretive, planning, and implementation responsibilities on their shoulders, survey feedback can promote a level of interest and energy among employees that can help sustain even very lengthy organizational change efforts.

Finally, besides being a very versatile tool for diagnosing and addressing communication difficulties in organizations, survey feedback is also a very visible form of organizational--and particularly vertical --communication. The actual process of conducting a survey feedback project, and the way in which management receives and responds to the survey results, speaks volumes to employees about management's sincerity and genuine interest in promoting vertical communication. Survey feedback affords management the opportunity to publicly demonstrate its commitment to effective vertical communication processes. The potential benefits to managerial credibility are, as might be expected, enormous (as are the potential injuries, if the survey is mishandled, or the results abused or simply ignored).

In conclusion, survey feedback is a useful, versatile, and engaging means of examining and promoting vertical communication processes in organizations. It generates answers to questions that organizational members think are worth asking, and provides a framework within which constructive actions can be taken in response to issues identified. Conducted appropriately and competently, it is one of the most powerful diagnostic and problem-solving tools available to those practitioners, scholars, and consultants interested in improving organizational communication.

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PART 2

CURRICULUM IMPLICATIONS

AN INVESTIGATION OF BUSINESS/ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION COURSES IN AACSB-ACCREDITED SCHOOLS OF BUSINESS--TRENDS IN STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the structure and content of business communication courses which are required in the common body of knowledge in AACSB-accredited schools of business. An analysis of the responses from coordinators of business communication curricula showed that the majority of business communication core courses were categorized as being courses in which more than 60 percent of the time is devoted to the development of writing competencies. An analysis of the time spent on various course topics indicated that writing was emphasized in this course. Although the basic writing competencies of students entering the business communication courses are perceived to be quite low, few schools pretest students to assure a minimum level of writing competency. This research study did not indicate a trend toward deemphasizing the development of written communication skills in AACSB-accredited schools of business.

BACKGROUND

The value of business communication courses to the success of the business graduate has been documented in numerous studies [5]. Although many studies have investigated the importance of written, oral, and interpersonal communication competencies, the literature is inconclusive in identifying the trends in the structure and content of the required or core course in AACSB accredited colleges of business.

The current AACSB curriculum standards refer to communication competencies two times, and then only in a very general way. First, when describing the foundation courses to be completed during a student's freshman and sophomore years, the standards list "communications" along with other subject areas such as mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Then, when describing the common body of knowledge in business administration, the standards include "a study of organization theory, behavior, and interpersonal communications." This first reference to "communication" appears to be referring to English and speech communication courses generally taught outside the school of business. The second reference to communication competencies is

generally interpreted to mean organizational communication theory, small group interactions, and oral communication. Thus the AACSB standards give little emphasis to business communication competencies and ignore specific written communication competencies [1, pp. 26-27].

Joseph Penbera, business dean of Franklin University, evaluated his school's business curriculum based on advice gained during a CEO/Dean's Workday Program with local businesses and industry. One outcome was explained as follows: "We modified the communications component of our curriculum to increase the writing, reporting and public speaking aspects because we found that there was a realization among the business community that the liberal education was very good and important, but that general education had led to general problems in communication . . . there was too little real skill emphasis on communicating and writing. Most of the employers identify communication as the number one problem of college graduates, and not only our graduates, but others that they hire . . ."[3, p. 2]

Several research studies have indicated specific communication competencies or topic areas which should be emphasized in the business communication course. Olney conducted a study of executives in Fortune 500 companies to determine their communication needs and to obtain their suggestions relating to business communication course content. The executives indicated the five communication forms they most often use are memorandum (95.6%), letter, (95.6%), oral presentation (82.1%), analytical report (80.4%), and informational report (71.8%). A list of 30 possible content areas was also rated by the executives to determine those areas needing greatest emphasis. The areas rated highest were oral presentation (90.7%), memorandum writing (84.1%), basic English grammar (81.4%), informational report writing (81.4%), analytical report writing (80.9%), persuasive speaking (79.6%), listening (79.5%), spelling (78.9%), reading (76.7%), and punctuation (73.2%) [6, pp. 1-2,5].

The Gibson and Glenn study emphasized the need to convince business communication educators to tailor the business communication course to include interpersonal communication, group discussion, and public speaking. They stated that these areas can be easily adapted to situations likely to occur in business [4].

Andrews and Sigband researched the efficiency of communication skills among accounting graduates. Managing partners in large accounting firms (listed in the AICPA list of "105 largest accounting firms in the U.S.") were among those surveyed. A number of very interesting findings were reported. New graduates' written communication skills were rated by the practicing accountants as "inadequate" almost three times as often as "satisfactory" or higher. Oral communication skills were rated "inadequate" only slightly more often than "satisfactory" or higher. In interpersonal skills the new graduates were evaluated as being decidedly "inadequate" rather than "satisfactory" or higher. These professional accountants stated that the educational institutions are responsible for providing skill enhancement in three areas of communication: written, oral, and interpersonal. The accounting professionals reported the following topics of value (listed in the order of importance) in each of the three communication areas: written--memos,

reports, letters; oral--meetings and conferences, interviewing, presentations; and interpersonal--information-gathering, persuasive, and conflict resolution. The researchers concluded that accounting majors in four- and five-year undergraduate programs should take a minimum of two courses in communication. They emphasized that each course should include an integration of written, oral, and interpersonal relations, rather than offering separate courses in each of these areas [2, pp. 18, 23].

In 1973 the Undergraduate Studies Committee of the American Business Communication Association recommended that a five-year study of the views of business graduates concerning the basic business communication course be conducted. The purpose of the survey was to determine how 1974 graduating business seniors in the United States evaluated the course content, classroom procedures, instructional quality, and course quality for their first courses in business communication. The respondents were also questioned in 1975 and 1976 to determine changes in their views concerning the business communication class. In 1976 the 36 respondents (73 percent) expressed opinions that the proportions of time spent on letter writing and long report writing should be significantly reduced. In contrast, they indicated that the proportions of time devoted to interoffice memorandums, platform speaking, interpersonal or small-group communication, interviewing, listening, nonverbal communication, barriers to communication, and psychology of communication should be significantly increased. The topics which they felt had been given appropriate emphasis were short reports, dictating, job applications, communication theory and semantics, and "other." The respondents also indicated that more time should be devoted to small-group discussions and that student presentations should be significantly increased. The need for strengthening communication skills was felt strongly by 81 percent of the respondents. The areas in which the need was felt, ranked in order of proportions, are interpersonal communication, psychology of communication, letters, oral reports, written reports, telephone, interviewing, semantics, meetings, memos, nonverbal communication, dictating, and "other" [7].

Overall the literature seems to indicate that the business communication course should develop not only written communication competencies but also oral and interpersonal communication skills. This paper poses the question "Is there a trend toward deemphasizing written communication development in order to give emphasis to oral and organizational communication competencies?"

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This research study was designed to investigate the structure and content of business communication courses required of all school of business majors in AACSB accredited institutions throughout the United States. The research was designed to determine:

a. The number of AACSB-accredited schools which have a business communication course taught within the school of business that is part of the common body of knowledge or business core.

b. The department within the school of business in which the required course is taught.

c. The amount of time spent on specific content areas.

d. Business communication coordinators' perception of the students' level of basic writing skill (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure) upon entering the course.

e. Whether students are required to pass a writing proficiency examination as a course prerequisite.

f. If business communication core courses give major emphasis to the development of writing competencies or if a trend is developing toward structuring the course around non-traditional organizational communication topics.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research methodology included a survey of business communication coordinators in the 238 AACSB-accredited institutions in the continental United States as of spring, 1984. The coordinators of business communication courses within the schools of business were asked to complete a questionnaire requesting the following data:

a. The number of business communication courses taught within the following four categories and whether each course was required of all school of business majors:

Category A--Business English--major emphasis on grammar and basic writing

Category B--Business Communication--more than 60 percent of course time devoted to writing (correspondence, reports, etc.)

Category C--Business/Organizational Communication--up to 60 percent writing; 40 percent or more organizational communication theory and application

Category D--Organizational Communication--little or no emphasis on written communication

b. The name of the department within the school of business in which the business communication course(s) is(are) taught.

c. The percent of course time spent on the following selected topics in the Category B and C courses, using a Likert-type scale: 1, 0%; 2, 1-5%, 3, 6-10%; 4, 11-20%; 5, 21-30%; 6, 31+%:

a. grammar
b. general communication theory (process; barriers; etc.)
c. correspondence--letters; memos
d. employment process
e. memo/letter reports
f. short reports
g. long reports
h. research and data analysis skills
i. group communication
j. interpersonal communication
k. interviewing skills
l. listening skills
m. impact of new technology on communication
n. oral presentations

d. The coordinators' attitudes concerning the level of student competency in applying rules of English grammar, punctuation, word choice, etc., upon entering the first required Category B or C course, using a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "deficient" and 5, "excellent."

e. Whether students entering the first required Category B or C course have to pass an English proficiency examination prior to entering the course to test their ability in applying rules of English grammar, punctuation, word choice, etc.

Usable questionnaires were returned from 158 or 66 percent of the institutions. However, only 108 of these institutions taught business communication courses in the school of business; only 64 of these institutions had a business communication course within the business core. The findings in this paper are based upon the business communication courses of these 64 institutions.

For categories B and C courses, the rated percent of time spent on specific topics was analyzed. The mean rating and mode were determined for the relative amount of time spent on each topic. One-way analysis of variance for unequal sample sizes was used to test for equivalence among the mean ratings given in each of the two categories of courses for each topic. The same statistical test was used to evaluate the coordinators' perceptions of the basic writing competency of students entering the business communication course. The mean ratings assigned by participants who have a Category B, Category C, and Category D course were tested for equivalence.

RESULTS

Analysis of the data resulted in (1) a description of required business communication courses in AACSB schools, (2) a summary of the

content of these required courses, (3) a view of the coordinators' perceptions of the basic writing competencies of students entering the course, and (4) a generalization about the use of a competency test to screen students entering the business communication course.

Description of Required Courses in AACSB Institutions

The 64 required courses in AACSB institutions as identified in the study were categorized as follows:

Category B--Business Communication	47 (74%)
Category C--Business/Organizational Communication	13 (20%)
Category D--Organizational Communication	4 (06%)

The courses were taught in the following departments:

	Management/ Marketing	Administrative Services/ Business Education	Other
Category B Courses	13 (28%)	27 (57%)	7 (15%)
Category C Courses	7 (54%)	5 (38%)	1 (8%)
Category D Courses	3 (75%)	0 (0%)	1 (25%)

These data indicate that the Category B course is the communication course most often required of all majors in AACSB schools of business. The Category B--Business Communication course is most frequently taught in an Administrative Services/Business Education department. Category C--Business/Organizational Communication and Category D--Organizational Communication courses are most often taught in a Management/Marketing department.

Content of Required Category B and C Courses in AACSB Institutions

Table 1 presents the mean rating and mode for each topic area rated for business communication courses described as Category B and Category C (course time rated using a scale of 1, 0%; 2, 1-5%; 3, 6-10%; 4, 11-20%; 5, 21-30%; 6, 31+%). Analysis of variance revealed that a significant difference did exist between mean ratings for topic areas b, c, d, f, g, i, and l in Category B and C courses as also shown in Table 1.

As would be expected, the analysis of the percent of course time spent on selected topics indicated that writing applications are most often taught in the Category B course while communication theory, group communication, and listening skills are most often taught in the Category C course. An interesting observation is that no significant difference existed between the mean ratings of time spent on grammar in the Category B and C course; also, the mode for this topic was greater for the C course than for the B course. Last, no significant difference existed in the amount of time spent on oral presentations in the Category B and C course.

As identified earlier, the Category B course was the one most frequently a part of the school of business core. The topics to which

the most class time was devoted in the Category B course ranked as follows: 1, correspondence--letters, memos; 2, memo/letter reports; 3, general communication theory; 4, short reports and long reports; 5, employment process; and oral presentations. The topics to which the most class time was devoted in the Category C course ranked as follows: 1, general communication theory; 2, correspondence--letters, memos; 3, group communication; 4, memo/letter reports; 5, research and data analysis skills and oral presentations; and 6, grammar and listening skills.

TABLE I

PERCENT OF COURSE TIME SPENT ON SELECTED TOPICS--
CATEGORY B AND C COURSES

Course Topics	Category B Mode	Category B Mean	Category C Mean	Category C Mode
a. grammar	2	2.19	2.54	3
b. general communication theory (process; barriers; etc.)	2	2.98	3.92***	4
c. correspondence--letters; memos	4	4.38	3.54*	3,4,5
d. employment process	3	2.64	2.08**	1
e. memo/letter reports	2	3.11	2.85	3
f. short reports	2	2.96	2.08**	2
g. long reports	4	2.96	2.31*	2
h. research and data analysis skills	2	2.23	2.69	1
i. group communication	2	1.85	2.92***	1,3
j. interpersonal communication	1	1.94	2.38	1,2
k. interviewing skills	2	1.89	2.08	2
l. listening skills	2	1.77	2.54***	2
m. impact of new technology on communication	2	1.87	1.77	2
n. oral presentations	2,3	2.45	2.69	2,4

*significant difference at p = .10
**significant difference at p = .025
***significant difference at p = .01

Perceived Level of Student Competencies Upon Entering the Course

Table II exhibits the coordinators' perceptions of student competency upon entering the business communication course; the perceptions are grouped according to whether the institution has a required B, C, or D course.

TABLE II

PERCEIVED STUDENT COMPETENCY IN BASIC WRITING SKILL--
ANALYZED BY CATEGORY OF REQUIRED COURSE

Category of Course	Deficient 1	2	3	4	Excellent 5
B	12.8%	27.6%	55.3%	4.3%	0%
C	8.0%	30.8%	38.5%	15.4%	8.0%
D	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	0%

The mean ratings of perceptions of student competency within each category of course were as follows:

Required B Course	2.51
Required C Course	2.85
Required D Course	2.50

Analysis of variance revealed no significant difference between these mean ratings of coordinators in schools which required Category B, Category C, and Category D courses. The coordinators tended to agree that the basic writing skills of students entering their courses are average or below. For the schools of business requiring a Category B course, 95.7 percent of the coordinators evaluated their students as average or below. Coordinators in schools of business requiring a Category C and Category D course stated that 77.3 percent and 75 percent of their students respectively have average or below average basic writing competencies upon entering the course.

Use of Pre-test for Screening Business Communication Students

Fifteen of the responding institutions administer a pretest to screen students entering the first required course. All 15 schools have a required Category B course; the courses are taught in the following departments:

Management/Marketing	7
Administrative Services/ Business Education	7
Other	1

Only 23 percent of the schools administer a pretest to assure a minimum level of writing competency among students entering the required business communication course.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The major findings of this research may be summarized as follows:

1. The majority of business communication courses which are a part of the common body of knowledge requirements in AACSB-accredited schools of business were categorized by the business communication coordinators as being Category B courses--courses which devote more than 60 percent of their time to the development of writing competencies.

2. Statistical analysis of the ratings of time spent on specific course topics indicated that Category B courses actually devote a significantly greater amount of time to the development of written communication competencies than do Category C courses.

3. The basic writing competencies of students entering the business communication courses are perceived to be quite low. Yet few schools pretest students to assure a minimum level of writing competency among students in the core communication course. Although the mean rating for time spent in the Category B and C courses on the topic "grammar" were not significantly different, within the Category C course itself "grammar" ranked sixth in mean rank. No schools requiring a Category C core course, however, screened entering students for a basic writing competency.

Overall, this research does not indicate a trend toward deemphasizing the development of written communication skills in the business communication core course in AACSB-accredited schools of business. For instructors desiring to spend more time in the development of oral and interpersonal communication competencies, the solution may lie in pretesting students entering the course so that basic or remedial instruction in writing skills is unnecessary. The improved quality of student may also lead to a quicker mastery of the writing components of the course (correspondence, reports) and the freeing of time which can be devoted to the development of other communication competencies.

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BUSINESS EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATORS CONCERNING MOST SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS COMMUNICATION TOPICS

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ABSTRACT

This study highlights the difference of opinions employers and educators have regarding what should be included in the basic business communication course. A shift of thinking and course development is recommended to ensure students receive more than just written and theoretical aspects of business communication.

INTRODUCTION

Recent studies have supported a real importance for graduates to have additional ability in business communication. Thus, business communication educators must be constantly aware of what specific abilities the business community defines as crucial and ones that the business school graduate might encounter on the job. College and university programs must provide dynamic business communication curricula to meet these needs and to produce a better prepared graduate.

PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this study were (1) to compare those major topics (areas) of business communication that both business employers and business communication educators consider most important and (2) to recommend those areas that should be included by colleges and universities in business communication curricula.

The subjects of the study were 180 business employers and 200 business communication educators. The employers were secured from a list of businesses recruiting on the Stephen F. Austin State University campus in Nacogdoches, Texas, during the Fall 1983 and Spring 1984 semesters. Positions of these employers ranged from management executive trainees to upper management levels within businesses located in the East Texas area and two major metropolitan areas of the United States: Dallas-Fort Worth and Houston.

The names of business communication educators were taken from the 1984 American Business Communication Association Membership Directory and were selected at random from the colleges and universities located throughout the Southwest part of the United States: Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Arizona.

Sixty-one usable surveys were returned by 34 percent of the employers. Of those responding, 33 percent were from the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex area, 37 percent were from the Houston metroplex area, 18 percent were from the East Texas area. The remaining 12 percent represented other areas of Texas; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Rochester, New York; Kansas City, Missouri; and Washington, D. C. A grouping of the responses represented the following job fields: retail, accounting, energy, wholesale, banking, insurance, utilities, health and government, and industry including chemical, computer, and helicopter. This data is presented in Table 1.

Seventy-six surveys were returned by 38 percent of the educators. A grouping of the responses by the six states within the Southwest is presented in Table 2.

The survey instrument was constructed to include main instructional areas in business communication. These instructional areas were determined by analysis of courses in business communication taught at Stephen F. Austin. Specific courses included were written communication, organizational communication, and executive communication.

The respondents were asked to assess the importance of each instructional area as it applies to their job or to their students' future success. This forced rank/order identified topics believed to be important or not important for inclusion in business communication courses. The survey also allowed for each topic to be measured independently of the others regarding its importance to the respondents. This rank/order was performed by use of a scale rating each curriculum item from great value to no value. The survey also included specific questions to provide as much input to the study: Does business communication curricula need change?

RESULTS

Table 3 reports the rank/order of the instructional areas by both the employers and educators. The most noted difference between employers and educators was the ranking of Oral Presentation of Report(s). Educators ranked this area much lower in priority than did employers.

The next area with the most difference (divergency) in ranking was that of Disappointing Messages with employers ranking this lower in importance than educators.

All other areas were ranked within three items or less in priority ranking except for Neutral and Good News Messages which ranked four items lower in the employers' survey.

Table 1

Distribution of Employers

Fields	Frequency	Percent Respondents
Retail	12	19.7
Accounting	9	14.8
Energy	9	14.8
Industry*	8	13.1
Wholesale	6	9.8
Banking	4	6.6
Insurance	4	6.6
Utilities	4	6.6
Other	3	4.9
Health and Government	2	3.3

*Chemical, Computer, Helicopter, etc.

Table 2

Distribution of Educators

States	Frequency	Percent Respondents
Arizona	15	7.50
Arkansas	2	1.00
Louisiana	13	6.50
New Mexico	2	1.00
Oklahoma	9	4.50
Texas	35	17.50

Table 3

Rank Order of Areas
Comparative Results

Educators	Employers	Difference in Rank Order
Style	Persuasion	2
Goodwill	Oral presentation of reports	11
Persuasion	Style	2
Appearance	Appearance	0
Preparing short reports: memo, letter, progress, & justification reports	Goodwill	3
Disappointing messages	Preparing short reports: memo, letter, progress, & justification reports	1
Neutral and Good News messages	Evaluating yourself and potential employers	2
Persuasive messages	Preparing analytical reports	2
Evaluating yourself and potential employers	Letters about employment	2
Preparing analytical reports	Persuasive messages	2
Letters about employment	Neutral and Good News messages	4
Reports: importance, nature of classification	Disappointing messages	6
Oral presentation of reports	Reports: importance, nature of classification	0

Tables 4 and 5 present the percentage of respondents who indicated if the instructional area should be included in the university business communication curriculum. These percentages are listed on each table by the rank of importance for inclusion.

Tables 6 and 7 present a summary of the rank of importance for twenty-one topics. The most important to least important topics are shown based on the mean score of the employers and educators independent ranking of each item.

Tables 8 and 9 list the four most important areas that employers and educators say should be included in the basic business communication course. Employers ranked the following four areas in the top four: listening first with 57.4 percent, oral communication second highest with 41 percent, interpersonal communication skills third highest with 34.4 percent, and written communication fourth highest with 29 percent.

Educators ranked letters first with 53 percent, reports second with 50 percent, oral presentations third with 29 percent, and memorandum fourth with 21 percent.

The most noted comparison is the obvious difference of opinion concerning oral and written communication. Business employers placed more emphasis on oral communication over written communication by an approximate ratio of 2:1. Where the educators reversed this emphasis and placed written communication above oral communication at an approximate ratio of 5:1.

Other interesting and significant comparisons: theory did not have a place in the employers' responses while 18 percent of the educators ranked it in the top four; listening received top ranking by employers (53 percent) but received seventh in its ranking by educators (14 percent); and interpersonal communication skills were ranked third highest by the employers (34.4 percent) and ranked eighth place by the educators.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of this study clearly indicate a significant diversity in what most employers and educators deem important for inclusion in the basic business communication course. Employers placed heavier emphasis on listening skills, oral communication, interpersonal skills, while educators tend to emphasize written and theoretical aspects of a communication curriculum.

Educators who are serious about providing "state of the art" business communication education should consider:

1. A thorough evaluation of their total business communication education currently provided,

2. Inclusion of topics as listening, oral presentation skills, interpersonal communicational skills in the written communication course,

Table 4

Summary of the Rank and Percent of Areas for University Curriculum by Employers

Areas	Rank	Percent
Listening	1	86.9
Making Presentations in Meetings	2	83.6
Giving Feedback	3	82.0
Giving Instructions	3	82.0
Handling Conflicts	3	82.0
Letters	3	82.0
Understanding and Improving Communication Flow	4	80.3
Interpersonal Communication	5	78.7
Overcoming Communication Barriers	6	75.4
Handling Discipline	6	75.4
Interviewing Skills	6	75.4
Leading a Meeting	7	73.8
Public Speaking/Briefing	8	70.5
Nonverbal Communication	9	67.2
Short Reports	9	67.2
Memorandums	10	62.3
Use of Audio-Visual Materials for Presentations	11	59.0
Communication Audit/Analysis	12	55.7
Telephone Usage	13	44.3
Long Reports	14	41.0
Dictating	15	23.0

Table 5

Summary of the Rank and Percent of Areas for University Curriculum by Educators

Areas	Rank	Percent
Interpersonal Communication	1	97.0
Letters	1	97.0
Memorandums	1	97.0
Listening	2	96.9
Short Reports	3	95.2
Overcoming Communication Barriers	4	93.9
Interviewing Skills	5	89.1
Making Presentations in Meetings	6	88.9
Giving Feedback	7	85.1
Giving Instructions	8	84.8
Understanding and Improving Communication Flow	9	84.6
Public Speaking/Briefing	10	83.3
Nonverbal Communication	11	82.8
Leading a Meeting	12	78.7
Use of Audio-Visual Materials for Presentations	13	76.1
Handling Conflicts	14	72.3
Long Reports	15	67.6
Communication Audit/Analysis	16	63.6
Telephone Usage	17	60.5
Handling Discipline	18	58.5
Dictating	19	57.8

Table 6

Summary of the Rank and Mean of Importance for Twenty-one Topics by Employers

Topics	Rank	Mean Score
Listening	1	4.37
Interpersonal Communication	2	5.48
Giving Instructions	3	7.56
Handling Conflicts	4	8.20
Giving Feedback	5	8.50
Understanding and Improving Communication Flow	6	8.57
Overcoming Communication Barriers	7	8.91
Letters	8	9.62
Making Presentations in Meetings	9	9.72
Handling Discipline	10	10.83
Nonverbal Communication	11	11.31
Short Reports	12	11.37
Leading a Meeting	13	11.54
Public Speaking/Briefing	14	11.87
Memorandums	15	12.00
Telephone Usage	16	13.19
Interviewing Skills	17	13.94
Communication Audit/Analysis	18	14.00
Long Reports	19	15.11
Use of Audio-Visual Materials for Presentations	20	16.43
Dictating	21	18.82

Table 7

Summary of the Rank and Mean of Importance for Twenty-one Topics by Educators

Topics	Rank	Mean Score
Interpersonal Communication	1	5.4
Letters	2	5.5
Memorandums	3	6.3
Short Reports	4	6.7
Listening	5	7.7
Overcoming Communication Barriers	6	8.5
Making Presentations in Meetings	7	9.7
Giving Instructions	8	9.9
Giving Feedback	9	10.2
Nonverbal Communication	10	10.9
Understanding and Improving Communication Flow	11	11.1
Public Speaking/Briefing	12	11.4
Leading a Meeting	13	11.5
Long Reports	14	11.6
Interviewing Skills	15	12.3
Handling Conflicts	16	13.0
Use of Audio-Visual Materials for Presentations	17	14.5
Communication Audit/Analysis	18	14.6
Telephone Usage	19	14.7
Handling Discipline	20	15.7
Dictating	20	15.7

Table 8

Four Most Important Areas Which Should Be Included in Basic Business Communication Course by Employers

Areas	Frequency	1st Area	2nd Area	3rd Area	4th Area
Listening	35	12	8	10	5
Oral Communication (Presentations)	25	10	6	2	7
Interpersonal	21	13	3	3	2
Written	17	5	6	3	3
Meeting and Client Presentations	14	0	4	3	7
Letter (External and Internal)	12	4	4	3	1
Communication Flow	11	2	3	3	3
Reports (Short and Long)	11	1	3	3	4
Giving Instructions	10	0	5	5	0
Conflict (Management)	9	0	1	4	4
Nonverbal	8	0	4	2	2
Graphic Aids	7	2	1	3	1
No Response	6	0	0	1	5
Clarity	6	0	3	2	1
Conciseness	6	2	1	1	2
Memorandums	5	2	1	2	0
Feedback	5	0	2	0	3
Interviewing	5	1	1	1	2
Goodwill	4	3	0	1	0
Organization	4	0	1	1	2
Conventions	4	1	0	0	3
Telephone Usage	4	1	2	0	1
Persuasive Style	3	1	2	0	0
Other	2	0	0	1	1
Word Processing	1	0	0	0	1
Questioning Skills	1	0	0	1	0
Decision Making	1	0	0	1	0
Overcoming Barriers	1	0	0	0	1
Adaptation	1	1	0	0	0

Table 9

Four Most Important Areas Which Should Be Included in Basic Business Communication Course by Educators

Areas	Frequency	1st Area	2nd Area	3rd Area	4th Area
Letters	38	12	16	7	3
Reports	36	6	14	12	4
Oral Presentation	21	1	4	7	9
Other	21	3	8	4	6
Memorandums	15	9	3	3	0
Communication Theory	13	11	0	1	1
Job Package	13	0	2	5	6
Writing Psychology, Principles, Skills, Techniques	12	6	4	0	2
Listening	10	2	4	1	3
Interpersonal	7	2	0	3	2
Audience Analysis	6	5	1	0	0
Mechanics	6	5	0	1	0
Fundamentals	5	5	0	0	0
Style	5	3	0	1	1
Nonverbal	5	0	1	1	3
Communication Technology/ Computer Usage	5	0	0	1	4
Organization	4	0	3	1	0
Dictating	3	0	0	0	3
Communication Skills	2	2	0	0	0
Barriers	2	0	0	1	1

and/or

3. Adoption of courses which would provide other communication topics besides the written and theoretical.

A LONG-TERM LOOK AT THE READABILITY OF SELECTED BUSINESS PERIODICALS

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ABSTRACT

The study presented here reports on an analysis of the readability of 18 business periodicals using Gunning's Fog Index to measure readability levels. Samples were taken from issues published during 1963, 1968, 1973, 1978, and 1983 to determine if reading levels had increased, decreased, or remained the same over the 20-year time period. The results indicate that to read an "average" journal article, one needs at least a college education. The reading levels did vary according to the intended audience for the periodical, with journals targeted to academicians having the highest overall mean (17.8) Fog Index.

INTRODUCTION

Business periodicals are widely used by faculty for both research and classroom teaching. Articles in such journals are often on the cutting edge of a discipline where theories are being developed, tested, and modified. In the field of Business Administration, articles are written by practitioners as well as by academicians. By examining such works, it is possible to get "real-world" exposure to the workings of theories either by inference or by practical examples. The subject matter in business journals is often complex, however, difficult material can often be made understandable if an article is written in the most readable fashion. Therefore, the question which needs to be answered is: Are articles in business periodicals written in the most readable fashion?

The question of readability is of interest for several reasons. First, is the periodical's content written at a level appropriate for its target audience? Some journals are aimed specifically at the academician and others strictly at the practitioner. Still others are targeted for both audiences. The typical business professor, however, probably has all levels of students engaged in reading assignments involving various periodicals. Therefore, the second aspect of readability involves the question of readability for the college student--both graduate and undergraduate. Given the complexity of the subject matter, and perhaps an inappropriate level of readability, assigning students to

read journal articles might produce a great deal of student frustration. Moreover, little comprehension may actually occur because of the difficulty in understanding the material.

Another facet of readability involves the declining performance of college and college-bound students on standardized reading comprehension tests. If overall reading skills have diminished, the decline in readability levels could accelerate if the readability of business periodicals has become increasingly more difficult. Thus, it would be useful to examine the literature for research findings concerning the readability of business-related periodicals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The results regarding readability levels for business-related publications are currently inconclusive. One early study found that eight out of ten management journals were harder to read in 1971 than in 1967 with three out of ten showing significant changes in readability. It was also reported that differences existed among journals in terms of readability [5]. Another study concluded that the readability of 22 out of 24 Accounting Principle Board "opinions" was "difficult" or "very difficult" based on the Farr-Jenkins-Patterson New Reading Ease Index [13]. A study of the readability of organizational textbooks revealed that most readability scores exceeded graduate student levels [15]. Another study involving the readability of accounting textbooks concluded that reading levels were below the level of intended users [11]. A later study examined financial accounting textbooks with the following conclusions: Reading levels increased in difficulty as the course level increased and reading levels were considerably below the grade levels of students for whom the texts are written [12]. Other studies confirmed that texts are generally written below the level of the audience in terms of readability [8, 16].

The number of readability studies involving business-related journals is small. Also, the absence of longitudinal studies does not allow a sufficient basis for conclusions about changes in readability levels over time. Such information would be useful in designing assignments for students.

One purpose of the present study was to compare the readability of business periodicals targeted for academicians, practitioners, and mixed audiences. A second objective was to determine if readability levels for business periodicals have remained stable or have changed over time. The research design used in the present study is presented next.

THE STUDY

The present study was designed to determine the level of readability of selected business journals. Several authors have noted that

Gunning's Fog Index is easy to apply and easy to interpret [1, 9, 10]. Because of these characteristics and the fact that research assistants were used to compute the readability levels, Gunning's Fog Index was utilized in the present research [3].

Another purpose of the present research was to determine if readability levels in business journals have changed over the years. Samples from five different points in time were taken beginning with 1963 where appropriate. Table 1 depicts the publications used in the present study and the number of 100± word samples taken from each publication for each year. A total of 901, 100± word samples were taken from the 18 journals used in the present research.

TABLE 1

JOURNAL SELECTION: TYPE AND SAMPLE SIZE

JOURNAL TYPE	NO. OF 100-WORD SAMPLES TAKEN				
ACADEMIC	1963	1968	1973	1978	1983
1. Academy of Management Journal	12	12	12	12	12
2. Administrative Science Quarterly	12	24	12	12	12
3. Decision Sciences	--	--	12[b]	12	--
4. Journal of Consumer Research	--	--	12[b]	--	12
5. Journal of Advertising	--	--	12	12[c]	12
6. Journal of Marketing Education	--	--	--	6[c]	12
PRACTITIONER					
1. Fortune	18	18	18	18	18
2. Harvard Business Review	18	18[d]	18	18	18
3. Supervisory Management	--	12[d]	12	12[e]	12
4. Management	--	--	--	12[e]	12
ACADEMIC AND PRACTITIONER					
1. Journal of Advertising Research	12	12	12	12	12
2. Journal of Business Research	12	--	12	12	12
3. Journal of Marketing	12[a]	12	12	12	12
4. Journal of Marketing Research	12[a]	12	12	12	12
5. Journal of Retailing	--	--	6	12	12
6. Interfaces	12	12	12	12	6
7. Management Science	12	12	12	--	9
8. Public Opinion Quarterly	12	12	12	12	10

[a] Issues from 1964 were used.
[b] Issues from 1974 were used.
[c] Issues from 1982 were used.
[d] Issues from 1969 were used.
[e] Issues from 1979 were used.

Categorizing the Journals Analyzed

The journals used in the research were selected based on their ability to meet three criteria: (1) the availability of the journal in the authors' university library, (2) the journal could be readily classified as being directed primarily towards practitioners, academicians, or both, and (3) the journal was considered a "respectable" journal or trade publication by a convenience sample of academicians.

Table 1 shows the 18 journals included in the sample. Eight were classified as targeted toward both academicians and practitioners; six were directed at academicians; and four considered practitioners as their primary market. The journals were placed into one of the three categories based on a review of the guidelines provided by the publisher for each journal. For example, the guidelines from the Journal of Retailing state: "In sum, the main objective of the Journal of Retailing is to serve as a vehicle for the transference of knowledge about retail phenomena among the various academic disciplines, and between academia and management." Therefore, this journal was placed in the "Both" category. On the other hand, the Harvard Business Review guidelines note that "Traditionally, Harvard Business Review's primary audience has been top management in U.S. industry." Based on this statement, the Harvard Business Review was placed in the practitioner's category. If a journal could not be readily categorized based on a review of its guidelines, then Cabell's classification in the Directory of Publishing Opportunities in Business Administration and Economics was used to categorize the journal.

Computing the Fog Index

As previously noted, the Fog Index was used in the present study because of its ease of application and interpretation. Swenson provides an excellent description of how this index is applied [14]:

> The Fog Index is calculated by the following steps:
>
> 1. Select one or more samples. Count out 100 consecutive words at random. If you are testing a lengthy report, two or more samples may be taken. Count each word, even "a's" and "I's." Do not count figures that are not spelled out. Count hyphenated words as one word.
>
> 2. Find the average number of words per sentence. This is done by dividing the total words in the sample by the number of sentences.
>
> 3. Find the percent of difficult words in the sample. Count the number of difficult words and divide by the total number of words.
>
>   -Include each word of three syllables or more as a difficult word.

-Exclude words of three syllables or more that are capitalized (except words that are capitalized because they start sentences).

-Exclude words of three syllables or more that are formed by two simple words, such as "chairperson" or "businessman."

-Exclude verb forms of three syllables in which the third syllable is "es" or "ed," such as "processes" or "converted."

4. Add the average number of words per sentence and the percent of difficult words. Multiply this sum by .4 in order to determine the readability level (in terms of grade level).

Here's an example. Follow these four steps:

Step 1: Just count out 100 consecutive words.

Step 2: Assume there are eight sentences in the sample.

$$\frac{100 \text{ words}}{8 \text{ sentences}} = 12.5 \text{ words per sentence}$$

Step 3: Assume 15 difficult words in the sample.

$$\frac{15 \text{ difficult words}}{100 \text{ words}} = .15 \text{ difficult words}$$

Multiply .15 by 100 for the next step. Thus, .15 x 100 = 15.

Step 4:

$$\begin{array}{rl} & 12.5 \text{ words per sentence} \\ + & 15 \quad \text{difficult words per } 100 \\ \hline & 27.5 \\ \times & 0.4 \\ \hline & 11 \quad \text{grade level of readability} \end{array}$$

The Journal of Marketing Research will be used to illustrate the procedure for computing the Fog Index by year for each journal. The Journal of Marketing Research is published four times per year. From each of the four Journal of Marketing Research issues published in 1968, three 100± word samples were selected. Therefore, a total of twelve 100± word samples were taken from the four Journal of Marketing Research issues published in 1968.

A random numbers table was used to determine from which page each sample was to be selected. After each page number was determined, a systematic random sampling procedure was used to determine from which part of the page the sample would be taken. For example, the research assistant was given the following instructions: Journal: Journal of Marketing Research (1968), Issue Number 1; Page Number 29; Paragraph 5;

Sentence 6. Your page number is 29, paragraph 5, and sentence 6. On page 29, start your counting with the first paragraph that has its beginning sentence on page 29 and go to the fifth paragraph, even if you have to go to page 30 or 31 to find the fifth paragraph. Starting with the first sentence in the fifth paragraph, count sentences until you reach the beginning of the sixth sentence. Starting at the beginning of the sixth sentence, count until you have reached the 100-word mark. If the hundredth word is in the middle of a sentence, continue counting until you reach the end of that sentence. The words you have just counted constitute the sample you will use to compute the Fog Index.

The Fog Index for each 100± word sample was computed by two different research assistants working independently of each other. Their computations were then compared and any discrepancies were resolved by an independent third party.

For the four issues of the 1968 Journal of Marketing Research, the twelve 100± word samples were used to compute the Fog Index level for this publication. The twelve Fog Index numbers were averaged to arrive at a Fog Index Level of 15.6 for the Journal of Marketing Research for 1968. The process was repeated for all periodicals in the study.

RESULTS

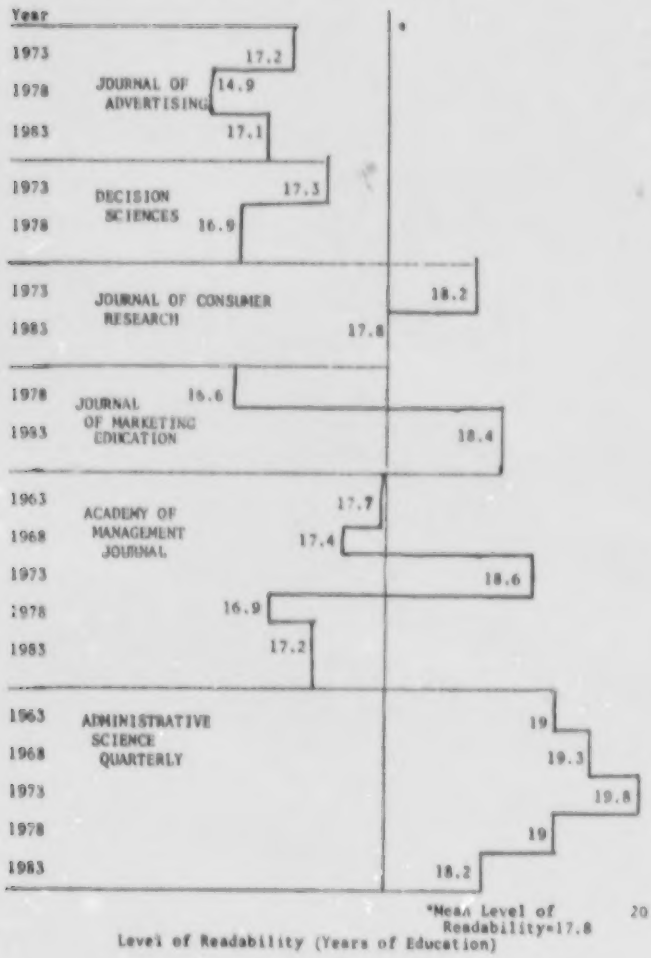
The Fog Index averages were computed for each series of years by journal. The first question of interest involved potential differences in the level of readability by the intended target market, i.e., academicians, practitioners, or both. The F-test was chosen to determine if differences existed between levels of readability by type of reader. The computed F-statistic of 14.13 was significant at below the .001 level. As expected, readability relates directly to the target market's perceived level of education. In other words, publications with academicians as their primary market have higher readability levels than those publications with practitioners as their primary market.

Readability for Academic Journals

A closer look at the variation in readability by target audience involves examining the data in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The range of means for academic journals (Table 2) was from 14.9 to 19.8. The overall average for academic journals was 17.8. An interesting aspect of the average readability is that for six of the seven academic journals, readability levels were highest in 1973. Data for the Journal of Marketing Education was unavailable for 1973. The Journal of Advertising was the easiest to read, while the Administrative Science Quarterly, with the highest Fog Index, was the most difficult to read.

Table 2

Levels of Readability of Periodicals
Targeted for Academicians



Readability for Practitioner Journals

Table 3 contains the means for journals targeted to the practitioner. The range was from 13.2 to 18.5 with no clear pattern as to variability. The mean level of readability was 15.4. Based on the computed Fog Indices, Fortune magazine was the easiest to read while the Harvard Business Review was the most difficult.

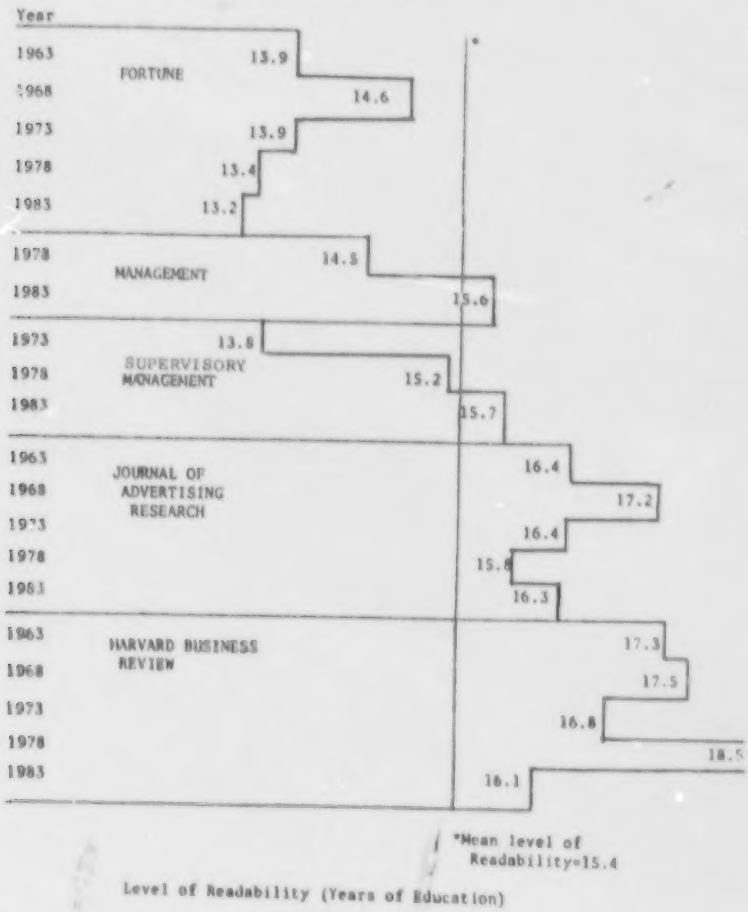
Readability for Mixed Audience Journals

Table 4 identifies the means of readability levels for journals targeted at mixed audiences. The Fog Index range was from 13.4 to 19.0 with the mean level of readability being 16.9. In terms of average readability level, the Journal of Retailing was the easiest to read and the Journal of Marketing the most difficult. Swenson suggests that we

gain our greatest comprehension from material we can read easily, slightly below the level of our reading ability [14]. If this is the case, then in order to easily comprehend articles in the Journal of Retailing, one would need to possess a Master's degree, given that a Master's degree requires 17 years of schooling. To easily comprehend the Journal of Marketing articles, one would need to have completed 19 years of education. In other words, one needs to have completed two years of coursework towards their doctorate to easily comprehend articles in the Journal of Marketing.

Table 3

Levels of Readability of Periodicals Targeted for Practitioners

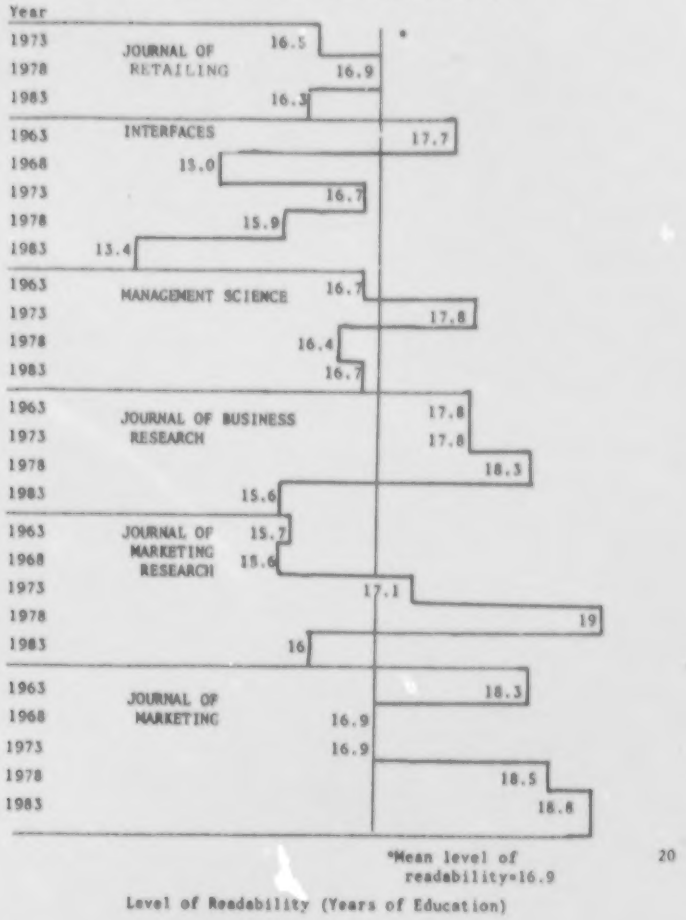


Changes in Readability Over Time

Variation within each category was considerable. The variation was statistically significant for each category with F-test results as follows: Academicians, $F = 22.4$, $P < .001$; Practitioners, $F = 16.1$, $P < .01$; and Mixed, $F = 20.8$, $P < .001$. Basically, readability was related to the perceived educational level of the audience. A later section will examine the appropriateness of those levels.

Table 4

Levels of Readability of Periodicals Targeted for Both Academicians and Practitioners



The second question of interest entailed the issue of change in the level of readability of business periodicals. The working hypothesis of this study assumed that based on Fog Index computations, readability levels had increased since 1963. The data do not support this hypothesis. Statistical analysis by years reveal no significant difference overall. The level of readability of some journals was very stable, while some increased, others decreased and some were variable. Any variation was probably random and due to error in measurement.

DISCUSSION

Even though this study of readability was exploratory in nature, its results are a starting point for some conclusions concerning the impact of readability of business journals on the education of students. First, with overall means of 17.8 (academicians), 15.4 (practitioners), and 16.9 (mixed audiences), periodicals written for these audiences have readability levels that are too high. This conclusion has been stated

time and time again by several authors. Nearly twenty years ago, D. L. Randall, in a letter to the editor, commented that articles appearing in Management Science were pretentious, verbose, obscure, and tended to produce very considerable confusion in the reader [7]. More recently, Parasuraman reported that 41 percent of the 150 commercial marketing researchers he surveyed "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that articles in research related journals were difficult to read and comprehend [6]. Ninety-five percent of Parasuraman's sample had their Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctor's degree.

If highly educated people find it hard to read business related journals, imagine how difficult a junior or senior business major must find it to understand the average article in such journals as Administrative Science Quarterly or Journal of Advertising Research. Given the measurable decline in their reading performances on standardized tests, undergraduate business students are most likely being assigned readings beyond their skill levels.

Another consideration is the impact of readability on a student's attitude towards the material. Once an article is identified as difficult to read (in academic journals nearly all would be classified as such), what are the consequences in terms of comprehension, retention, and learning of the subject matter? Razek and Cone point out that reading material which requires a disproportionately high level of effort to obtain a given quantity of information will cause frustration and anger on the part of the student and tend to make him adopt a negative view of the course, in spite of the excellence of the instructor [8]. Therefore, instructors who require students with 15 to 16 years of schooling to read journal articles written for individuals with 18 to 19 years of schooling risk turning the student off to the subject matter being taught. Professors also risk incurring lower student evaluations of teaching effectiveness because of the student's anger and frustration at having been assigned to read material they consider unduly difficult to understand.

A more sobering concern would be an answer to this question: "How many instructors avoid assigning the task of reading business journals because of the difficulty the students encounter in reading the articles?" A potentially great learning experience may not be utilized because students complain about the difficulty of reading journal articles. The objective complaint would be the amount of work involved; however, in reality, the student is probably upset because of the difficulty encountered in understanding the assigned reading material.

Still another, and broader, consideration surrounds the dissemination of academic research results. Given the disparity between the readability of academician- and practitioner-directed journals, what is bridging the gap between theory and practice? It is doubtful that the average practitioner would make the effort necessary to understand and learn from articles in the Administrative Science Quarterly which had an average readability level of 19.0.

Given the premise that one of the purposes of business periodicals is to disseminate useful knowledge to various audiences, how well

is this objective being accomplished? One audience for business-related research findings are practicing managers. While no studies have been found that report on educational levels of business managers in general, three studies were found that indicate a majority of people in managerial positions possess a college degree. Behrman and Perreault found that out of 42 sales managers who took part in their research, ". . . most . . . have a college education" [2]. Additionally, most of the salespersons they interviewed also had a college education. Keown reported that 83 percent of the marketing practitioners who responded to his questionnaire had a college degree [4]. Almost half of the respondents were in the field of advertising and sales promotion. Similar findings regarding educational levels of commercial marketing research personnel were reported by Parasuraman [6]. He reported that 95 percent of the 150 respondents to his questionnaire had a Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctor's degree.

Most management personnel today have a college degree, which means at the minimum they have 16 years of formal education. The average Fog Index for all journals in the present study for all years was 16.7. Therefore, if we accept Schultz's [9] conclusion that reading difficulty beyond the twelfth grade level taxes the memory of even well educated people and Swenson's [14] contention that business reports that exceed the fourteenth and fifteenth grade level may be understood by only a few, we must conclude that most business periodicals used in the present research are not very effective vehicles for conveying state of the art knowledge to management and marketing practitioners.

Finally, the authors wonder about readability in the overall scheme of learning. The primary aspects of readability using the Fog Index include sentence length and word difficulty. Only indirectly would other issues, such as writing style, be reflected in the Fog Index. Must specialized language be used to convey complex concepts in a discipline, or can the meaning be conveyed in simpler terms? What effect does an article's complexity have on business majors' motivation and morale when reading such articles? These issues deserve further consideration in future research efforts.

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PART 3

GENDER PERCEPTIONS FOR COMMUNICATION

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF SEX-CHARACTERISTIC STEREOTYPES VERSUS SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPES AFFECTING WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine managers' and potential managers' perceptions of sex-characteristic and sex-role stereotypes and determine if the two are separate factors, to examine perceptions of the "ideal manager" for reflection of masculine/feminine characteristics, and to examine any gender differences in perceptions of the "ideal manager," sex-characteristic and sex-role stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

> Snakes and snails and puppy dog tails,
> That's what little boys are made of.
>
> Sugar and spice and everything nice,
> That's what little girls are made of.
> [13, p. 59]

These simple nursery rhymes exemplify how society has commonly characterized males and females. Many people have learned too that boys play football, while girls play with dolls; boys do not cry, while girls are free to express their emotions, and boys become doctors, lawyers, engineers and businessmen, while girls become housewife, nurses, or secretaries. As Bernard [8] suggests, one's gender is a "predecision-maker," a categorization to which certain "rules" apply and the criteria for which decisions regarding that classification are based. Often such classification places limitations on what is considered acceptable for females and males. However, recently, such expectations are being increasingly challenged, and a number of studies have attempted to determine what, if any, are the differences (or similarities) between men and women [2; 39].

For the past several decades the gender variable has been important when examining communication among/between individuals [27, pp. 523-535; 16; 33, pp. 32-39; 3, pp. 179-192; 38]. When interacting with people, gender becomes a primary indexing factor. A person's gender

determines how others act and react to each other [23]. A relatively recent orientation to the study of gender has been that of psychological gender orientation [7, pp. 155-162]. This construct places an emphasis on an individual's identification with both masculine and feminine sex-role characteristics instead of mere classification by anatomical sex. As Wheeless and Wheeless [60, pp. 56-66] point out, "The tie between gender orientation and communication has been explained via sex-role norms/expectations and normative communication behaviors. Numerous research investigations report differences among gender variables."

One perspective which helps explain communication differences according to gender is attribution theory [37, pp. 107-128; 36; 31]. Attribution theory suggests that in analyzing the behavior of another person individuals use explanations based on internal causes (inferred properties and characteristics of the individual) or external causes (properties of the situation) [58; 34, pp. 189-195; 35, pp. 364-370; 21, pp. 120-126; 9, pp. 284-305; 10, pp. 280-286]. Research in attribution theory has provided support for the prediction that equivalent achievement by males and females is explained differently, such that attributions made for males' achievement are much more favorable than attributions made for females [25, pp. 20-31; 20, pp. 80-85; 56, pp. 427-437; 26, pp. 846-855]. So, recent studies have begun to investigate this perceived relationship between sex-role attitudes and the attribution process [46, pp. 691-698; 29, pp. 29-33]. And, although the results have been somewhat inconclusive, the indication is that attributions do vary as a function of sex-role attitudes. Therefore, the attributions about the behaviors and characteristics of males and females are affected by our preconceptions (predecisions) about their attributes, or by our perceived sex-characteristic/sex-role attitudes.

Today women are breaking tradition by expanding their roles to include careers/professions that are male, "masculine," dominated [47, pp. 891-897]. Despite these changes sex-characteristic/sex-role stereotyping still persists [17, pp. 566-572; 57, pp. 352-376; 15, pp. 1-7; 50, pp. 511-512; 51, pp. 287-295]. The socialization process [18; 39; 24] and differential educational training and aspirations [32, pp. 1-13; 45, pp. 285-293; 5, pp. 35-38] are two explanations accounting for sex-role stereotyping. And, the fact that people continue to have very definite ideas of what is "masculine" and "feminine" explain why sex-characteristic stereotyping continues [49, pp. 394-398; 3, pp. 179-192; 4]. Yet, in most studies sex-role and sex-characteristic stereotyping is not differentiated but decisions are primarily inferred by post hoc explanations. Terborg [57, pp 352-376] contends that both types explain job discrimination. As Terborg [57, pp 352-376] and Mellon [42, pp. 533-540] suggest, a reconceptualization of sex-stereotyping (preconceived attributions regarding appropriate male and female behaviors and characteristics) may prove valuable to further research attempting to explain occupational sex-bias.

PURPOSE

This study builds on Terborg's distinction between sex-role and

sex-characteristic stereotyping. By designing a scale to measure these two possible factors added specificity can be lent to stereotype research. The scales inclusion of "ideal" manager statements adds clarification as to the roles and characteristics perceived as most appropriate for managers. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_1=Sex-role stereotypes and sex-characteristic stereotypes of males and females in business are separate factors.

H_2=The "ideal" manager will possess characteristics generally ascribed to men rather than to women.

Because the literature often focuses on the differences between male and female attitudes, the following research question is also presented: What are the differences between males and females in their responses to sex-role stereotype items, sex-characteristic stereotype items, and perceptions of the "ideal" manager?

METHOD

Subjects

Subjects were 195 individuals (138 males, 57 females); 91 were students enrolled in Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration programs and 104 were managers/supervisors employed in selected organizations. Organizations used were public utilities, public services, educational institutions, and oil production and service companies.

Instrumentation

A thirty-five item survey questionnaire was used to measure sex-role stereotypes, sex-characteristic stereotypes, and perceptions of the "ideal" manager. The questionnaire, called the Personal Opinion Survey (POS) covered (1) sex-role stereotypes, (2) sex-characteristic stereotypes, Sex-Role Orientation Scale in accordance with statements referring to "traditionally" appropriate male and female behavior [14, pp. 31-40]. Sex-characteristic items were extracted from the Wheeless and Dierks-Stewart (1981) study. The "ideal" manager items were constructed from data reported in empirical studies by Schein [53, pp. 95-100; 54, pp. 340-344] and Basil [6]. The 33-item, forced choice test of social desirability [19, pp. 349-354] was also included as a test of reliablility and validity [28, pp. 321-331; 1, pp. 377-385; 55, pp. 89-94; 52, pp. 329-340].

Statistical Procedures

Correlations among the 35 Personal Inventory items were factor analyzed via principal components followed by orthogonal rotation. An eigenvalue cutoff of 1.0, the scree test and the criteria that at least

three items must have .60 or above loadings were chosen to determine the number of factors to extract. A .40 loading was used to determine what items loaded on each factor. T-test analysis used gender as the grouping variable to test differences between males and females for sex-role/sex-characteristic stereotypes and perceptions of the "ideal" manager. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship of social desirability among the various factors with the alpha being set at .05 for all analysis.

RESULTS

Appendix A shows the results of the principal components factor analysis following varimax (orthogonal) rotation. The first factor was comprised of 12 items and the factor was labeled "sex-role" stereotype. Factor 1 accounted for 15 percent of the variance. The second factor was comprised of 9 items and was labeled "ideal" manager. Factor 2 accounted for 9 percent of the variance. The third factor was comprised of 7 items and was labeled "sex-characteristic" stereotype. Factor 3 accounted for 8 percent of the variance. Reliablility coefficient scores for the three extracted factors were .78 for sex-roles, .61 for ideal managers, and .64 for sex-characteristics.*

Differences between male and female responses on the three dimensions and social desirability were determined by t-tests. On the sex-role dimension, t=8.4342, df=193, p=.0001. Thus, males and females differed in their perceptions of sex-roles, with males demonstrating a more traditional orientation (male $\bar{x}$=33.29, female $\bar{x}$=22.19). There were no significant differences between male and female responses on the "ideal" manager dimension (male $\bar{x}$=51.59, female $\bar{x}$=51.56) nor on the sex-characteristic dimension (male $\bar{x}$=24.41, female $\bar{x}$=25.25). There were no significant differences between male and female responses on social desirability (male $\bar{x}$=14.38, female $\bar{x}$=14.51).

To further examine the differences between male and female responses, separate t-tests analyses for each of the 12 items on the sex-role dimension were performed (see Appendix B). Those items reporting significant differences indicated that males held a more traditional view of the role of women. For example, male responses indicated less agreement than female responses with the statement "Women are equally independent as men."

---

*While the reliablilities of the factors were not as high as the investigators anticipated, this could have been due to the lack of high factor loadings for ideal manager items, i.e., only one item loaded above .60.

Of the 9 items loading highly on the "ideal" manager dimension, 6 of the items contained characteristics more commonly ascribed to men than to women, and 3 of the items contained characteristics as more common to women. According to these findings, respondents perceive the "ideal" manager to possess such "masculine" traits as leadership ability aggressiveness, consistency, decisiveness, self-confidence and being emotionally stable, as well as "feminine" traits such as being helpful to others, perceptive, and creative.

To determine the relationship of social desirability to the "ideal" manager, sex-role, and sex-characteristic dimensions the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficients were computed (see Appendix C). Social desirability was significantly correlated with the "ideal" manager traits dimension at .18 (p .05) which is a low correlation with the two variables sharing only 3 percent variance. Social desirability was negatively correlated with the sex-characteristics stereotype dimension at -.19 (p .05), which is also a low correlation with the two variables sharing only 4 percent variance. Social desirability was not significantly correlated with the sex-role stereotype dimension (r=.02, p .05).**

DISCUSSION

The study confirmed the first hypothesis that sex-role stereotypes and sex-characteristic stereotypes of males and females in business are separate factors. The two factors, labeled sex-role stereotypes and sex-characteristic stereotypes, did separate in factor analysis, with the sex-role stereotype dimension demonstrating a higher reliability than the sex-characteristic stereotype dimension. Both dimensions were significantly correlated thus confirming the assumption that people can behave toward others based on either or both stereotypes. The study found that male managers did not feel that women would make good supervisors, even though they did not perceive women to be any less capable than men. However, the male managers did perceive women to lack dependability, which influenced their negative perception of women supervisors. So, Terborg's contention that sex-role stereotypes and sex-characteristic stereotypes were two distinct forms of stereotyping was confirmed.

**Since the subjects used in this study were graduate students and managers to determine any differences in responses an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. For the sex-role dimension F=.20, df=3/177, p .05; for the sex-characteristic dimension F-.37, df=3/177, p .05, and for the "ideal" manager dimension F-1.44, df=3/177, p .05. There were no significant differences for social desirability. Thus, level of management had no significant effect on the responses of the individuals. Graduate students and established managers and supervisors seemed to respond similarly to the items surveyed.

Support was also found for the second hypothesis. The "ideal" manager was perceived to possess more "masculine" characteristics than "feminine" characteristics; however, three feminine personality traits (helpful, perceptive, and creative) loaded significantly in the factor analysis for factor inclusion. These results confirmed previous research findings that the "ideal" manager is perceived to possess a predominance of masculine dominant characteristics [43, pp. 317-33; 48, pp. 891-897; 53, pp. 95-100; 54, pp. 340-344; 6]. Thus, individuals who were managers or potential managers perceived the "ideal" manager to be aggressive, consistent, decisive, self-confident, helpful, perceptive, creative, and as having leadership ability. Therefore, in describing the "ideal" manager all indicated a preference for dominant and aggressive characteristics while not giving up some empathic qualities in being other oriented. This perception confirmed the lack of support for the preference toward the androgynous manager [48, pp. 891-897] but did not completely ignore the positive contribution of the sensitive nature of feminine characteristics.

Regarding the research question proposed in this study, male and female responses differed only on the sex-role stereotype dimension. Male responses on these items demonstrated a more traditional orientation than female responses. Men agreed more than women with such statements as: (1) "It is generally better to have a man as head of department composed of both men and women employees," (2) " Men are better leaders than women," (3) "A woman's place is in the home," (4) "A male student and a female are equally qualified for a certain scholarship; it should be awarded to the male student on the grounds that he has a greater 'career potential'" (5) "The husband should take primary responsibility for major family decisions, such as the purchase of a home or car." Some statements which men disagreed with more than women were: (1) "Women are equally independent as men," (2) "A married woman who chooses not to have children because she prefers to pursue her career should not feel guilty," (3) "It is certainly acceptable for boys, as well as girls, to play with dolls." These sex-role stereotype items proved to be a reliable (r=.78) measure of individuals' perceptions of appropriate sex-roles. So, role statements reflected the greatest gender differences.***

An examination of the demographic variables of age, education, and respondent's level of management produced interesting results.

***Although the present study found no gender differences in response to "ideal" manager traits, the Mellon et. al. [42] study did find gender difference in response to job requisite statements. Perhaps this dissimilarity in findings was due in part to their use of statements involving a variety of occupations and the traits associated with each, rather than the use of statements involving a single occupation and the traits associated with it.

Respondents' ages ranged from 21 to 74, with the average mean being 35 years of age. Age was not found to be significantly correlated with any of the three factors. Although age has received little or no attention in relation to these dimensions, it seemed reasonable to expect that age would be related to the sex-role stereotype measure, since the general belief is that older persons are more traditional in their attitudes toward sex-role stereotype than younger persons [14, pp. 31-40].

The education level of respondents ranged from "some high school" to "more than one graduate degree," with the educational mean indicating the attainment of an undergraduate college degree. Education was negatively correlated with sex-role stereotypes, indicating that those with less education responded with a more traditional sex-role orientation. In past sex-role research, education was an important variable in influencing sex-role orientation [22, pp. 173-182; 41, pp. 1212-1219]; however, in this investigation, education demonstrated only a low correlation (-.24).

The management status of respondents ranged from "not a supervisor" to "upper-management position." The average management level held by respondents appeared to be an entry-level or mid-management level position. An analysis of variance revealed no differences in responses among levels of management for the sex-role stereotypes, sex-characteristic stereotypes, and "ideal" manager traits dimensions.

In the 1980's it would seem that male subjects would have responded tothe sex-role stereotype items with a less traditional orientation due to current societal changes brought by such elements as the women's movement, increased number of women in the labor market, company workshops on women in management, and the much more publicized concept of androgyny. However, the present study suggests that traditional sex-role stereotypes continue to be predominant. This study suggests, too, that although males still hold traditional perceptions of sex-role stereotypes, the attitudes of American women about appropriate sex-roles may be changing. This poses a question for future research, that as women's roles in the work arena change, will individuals' perceptions of appropriate behavior and associated characteristics also change? Further, how will such changes, or lack of, affect employment decisions?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since sex-role stereotypes and ex-characteristic stereotypes were found to be two distinct factors, further research should be designed to examine the effects of each stereotype on organizational personnel decisions. The measures could feasibly be organizational personnel decisions. The measures could feasibly be utilized to measure the sex-role/sex-characteristic perceptions of personnel exployment interviewers to assess their degree of traditional or non-traditional orientation. Distinguishing between sex-role and sex-characteristic stereotypes may be a valuable approach to the investigation of gender-

biased occupational attitudes.****

The present study confirmed previous conclusions regarding the "ideal" manager [43, pp. 317-333; 48, pp. 891-897; 53, pp. 95-100; 54, pp. 340-344; 6]. From the perspective of attribution theory, results indicated that when making attributions about others, respondents relied on the perceived characteristics of the individual (internal cause). In other words, when attributing traits of the "ideal" manager, respondents conceptualized the managerial role as one dominated by males thus attributing personality characteristics deemed appropriate for males, i.e., "masculine" characteristics. Further research utilizing the "ideal" manager measure is needed, so that any changes toward a more andogynous view of the "ideal" manager can be monitored. With the increased emphasis on participative management [44; 61] and development of human relations skills in management [40, pp. 40-43; 12; 11] the preference for the andogynous manager may soon be realized and more clearly identified.

CONCLUSION

The examination of individuals' perceptions of sex-role stereotypes, sex-characteristic stereotypes, and "ideal" manager traits has illustrated the importance gender plays in perceptions of others. Since the way we perceive others affects our communication with them, gender has also become an important factor when examining communication between/among individuals. Thus, our interaction with others has been found to correspond with the traditional norms of appropriate behavior and characteristics for males and females. Our attributions about what is "masculine" characteristics as the results of this study confirm. So, if we attribute males as having leadership ability (sex-characteristic stereotype), we would probably perceive males as performing better than females in leadership roles such as manager (sex-role stereotype). Thus, perceived sex-characteristic stereotypes and sex-role stereotypes have influenced the perpetuation of occupational sex-bias.

****With respect to sex-characteristic stereotype items, in this study no gender differences were found. Terborg [57] noted that the effects of sex-chacteristic stereotypes may be highly situational; therefore, a possible explanation for the lack of gender differences in response to such items may have been due to over-generalized trait statements and not being associated with any specific situation or context. The Mellon et. al. [42] study linked such differences to specific jobs and occupational roles.

APPENDIX A

Orthogonal Rotation Factor Analysis of Sex-Role Stereotypes, Sex-Characteristic Stereotypes and Ideal Manager Traits

	Item	Factor 1 (Sex-role stereotype)	Factor 2 (Ideal Manager traits)	Factor 3 (Sex-Characteristic stereotype)
1.	People in managerial positions must be able to assume leadership abilities	-.02895	.57167*	.02292
2.	It is generally better to have a man as head of a department composed of both men and women employees.	.77245*	.12753	.10777
3.	Men are better leaders than women.	.71862*	.11186	.09469
4.	Women should be able to compete with men for jobs that have traditionally belonged to men, such as telephone lineman.	-.56749*	.13334	.04457
5.	Women are equally independent as men.	-.41921*	.03987	-.24885
6.	People in managerial positions are career-oriented.	-.06314	.33801	-.01870
7.	People in management should be aggressive.	.15037	.55346*	-.13353
8.	Men are as helpful to others as women.	.05917	.32247	-.57080*
9.	Managers should demonstrate consistency in handling of employees.	-.02050	.45328*	-04991
10.	Women are as competitive as men in seeking professional positions.	-.02692	.20812	-.43882*

	Item	Factor 1 (Sex-role stereotype)	Factor 2 (Ideal Manager traits)	Factor 3 (Sex-characteristic stereotype)
11.	Men should be able to compete with women for jobs that have traditionally belonged to women, such as secretary.	-.61211*	.17691	-.07510
12.	Women are more eager to soothe others' hurt feelings than are men.	.03627	.14866	.77512*
13.	Managers should display keen awareness of the feelings of others.	-.20417	.25607	-.09087
14.	Women are, by nature, more understanding than men.	.01241	-.08822	.64222*
15.	Managers should be decisive.	-.11365	.57064*	-.09126
16.	A married woman who chooses not to have children because she prefers to pursue her career should not feel guilty.	-.46924*	.18465	-.03483
17.	Successful managers are those who are interested in people.	-.30760	.21928	.21830
18.	Men are as compassionate as women.	-.16631	.12020	-.59448*
19.	Women can be as aggressive as men.	-.53753*	.22528	.20842
20.	"A woman's place is in the home." Agree or Disagree.	.48454*	.10016	.15028
21.	Self-confidence is characteristic of people in management.	.01916	.55056*	-.03411
22.	A woman should refrain from being too competitive with men and keep her peace rather than show a man he is wrong.	.31808	-.05924	.10392

	Item	Factor 1 (Sex-role stereotype)	Factor 2 (Ideal Manager traits)	Factor 3 (Sex-characteristic stereotype)
23.	Emotional stability is necessary for people in managerial positions.	-.05523	.61029*	.00139
24.	A male student and a female student are equally qualified for a certain scholarship; it should be awarded to the male student on the grounds that he has greater "career potential."	.60796*	-.18481	-.07443
25.	Being successful in a career is more important to people in management.	.12432	-.01944	.16015
26.	The use of profane or obscene language by a woman is no more objectionable than the same usage by a man.	-.29180	-.09990	-.34537
27.	People in managerial positions should be helpful to others.	-.14412	.46761*	-.08235
28.	The relative amounts of time and energy devoted to a career on the one hand and to home and family on the other hand, should be determined by one's personal desires and interest rather than by one's sex.	-.48542*	.08325	.12294
29.	Men are more assertive than women.	.15238	-.02824	.50140*
30.	Successful managers are very perceptive individuals.	-.00188	.40374*	.04615
31.	It is certainly acceptable for boys, as well as girls, to play with dolls.	-.49386*	-.08361	-.17224
32.	Women are more sensitive to the needs of others than are men.	.06298	.04209	.73247*

Item	Factor 1 (Sex-role stereotype)	Factor 2 (Ideal Manager traits)	Factor 3 (Sex-characteristic stereotype)
33. Creativity is vital to a managers'effectiveness.	.07336	.44080*	-.10571
34. The husband should take primary responsibility for major family decisions, such as the purchase of a home or car.	.72039*	.11278	.10699
35. It is important for people in managerial positions to be objective.	-.18162	.39114	.08302
Eigenvalues	5.19076	3.10942	2.70236
Variance	15%	9%	8%
Total Variance		32%	

APPENDIX B

t-Tests Between Male and Female Responses to Sex-Role Items

Item	Male $\bar{x}$	Female $\bar{x}$	t	p
2. It is generally better to have a man as head of a department composed of both men and women employees.	3.82	1.89	8.9873	.0001
3. Men are better leaders than women.	3.53	1.61	9.6457	.0001
4. Women should be able to compete with men for jobs that have traditionally belonged to men, such as telephone lineman.	5.49	5.68	-1.9069	.0597
5. Women are equally independent as men.	5.03	5.68	-26804	.0085
11. Men should be able to compete with women for jobs that have traditionally belonged to women, such as secretary.	5.55	6.16	-3.4010	.0009
16. A married woman who chooses not to have children because she prefers to pursue her career should not feel guilty.	5.77	6.51	-3.9972	.0001
19. Women can be as aggressive as men.	5.97	6.28	-2.2885	.0237
20. "A woman's place is in the home." Agree or Disagree.	2.55	1.67	4.7[illegible]46	.0001
24. A male student and a female student are equally qualified for a certain scholarship; it should be awarded to the male student on the grounds that he has greater "career potential."	2.22	1.60	2.8792	.0049

Item	Male $\bar{x}$	Female $\bar{x}$	t	p
28. The relative amounts of time and energy devoted to a career on the one hand and to home and family on the other hand, should be determined by one's personal desires and interest rather than by one's sex.	5.97	6.39	-2.0540	.0426
31. It is certainly acceptable for boys, as well as girls, to play with dolls.	4.36	5.44	-4.1312	.0001
34. The husband should take primary responsibility for major family decisions, such as the purchase of a home or car.	3.30	1.81	7.4516	.0001

n=195

APPENDIX C

Correlations Among Sex-Role Stereotypes, Ideal Manager Traits, Sex-Characteristic Stereotypes, and Social Desirability

Variables	Sex-Role Stereotypes	Ideal Manager Traits	Sex-Characteristic Stereotypes
Ideal Manager Traits	-.07		
Sex-Characteristic Stereotypes	.22*	-.17*	
Social Desirability	-.02	.18	-.19

$p < .05$
n=195

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MALE-FEMALE DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATING JOB-RELATED HUMOR: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate male-female differences in the propensity to communicate humor as a behavioral response pattern in socially awkward situations at work. Results showed that the male humor response was significantly higher than the female response; females had a significantly higher helping response. The study verified much of what is hypothesized by the literature, namely that humor seems to be less a part of the female's communicative patterns.

INTRODUCTION

A recent cartoon showed an executive complaining to his subordinate of numerous business ills (inflation, slumping sales, a faltering economy, etc.). He concluded, through gritted teeth and cigar, that he would not survive without his sense of humor. Even the recent bestseller, In Search of Excellence, referred to the need for fun and humor when communicating in organizations. Advertising entrepreneur David Ogilvy is quoted as saying,

> When people aren't having any fun, they seldom produce good advertising. Kill grimness with laughter. Maintain an atmosphere of informality. Encourage exuberance. Get rid of sad dogs that spread gloom [23, p. 291].

Abundant literature indicates the importance of humor in the workplace; yet it is also proposed by some authors that women lack (or do not make use of) humor when communicating in professional activities. The broader societal issues have generated considerable literature and debate (equal pay; sexual harassment; pregnancy-maternity rights; sexual stereotyping; and others); however, little study has been done regarding the communicating behaviors of women in management.

A very important communications issue, and one that has been all but ignored in empirical research, is the use of humor by women in professional situations. Humor can play a vital role in interpersonal success and has been viewed as an indispensible aspect of managerial effectiveness. The purpose of this paper is to empirically examine male-female differences in the use of humor when communicating in professional situations.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Malone [15] and Duncan [5] have recently addressed the issue of humor in management. Both articles summarized pertinent literature and called for additional research. Shafer [25] stated that many corporations are beginning to take a serious interest in humor to be used in speeches, training, employee relations, and other day-to-day activities. Crain [3] added that a quick wit and use of appropriate humor can be a real asset in career success; indeed, Kotter found that general managers spent much time in discussions which "...typically contained a considerable amount of joking, kidding, and nonwork-related issues. The humor was often about others in the organization or industry" [13, p. 80]. Similarly, Cronin (an executive search firm head) polled four hundred and eighty chief executives and found that they perceived young executives with MBA's to possess a lesser sense of humor than others. Cronin believes that young executives who lack humor are without a valuable tool: "Succcess in any field depends on influencing others, and wit is still one of the best tools for doing that" [20, p. 71].

Thus, the literature suggests a correlation between career success and humor implementation. As mentioned above in the Shafer article, organizations are finding specific, day-to-day uses of humor. Skinner [26] investigated the impact of humor on survey response; Foster [7] postulated that counselors may use humor to facilitate client growth and understanding; Otten [22] reviewed the use of humorous films (mostly by John Cleese of "Monty Python" fame) as a training technique to involve (and keep awake) an audience; Kauffman and Dwyer found that cartoons were more effective than realistic pictures used in training programs; and Clutterbuck [2] cited the work of communications consultants who have organizational members reappraise their team roles by drawing cartoons of ineffective organizational activities.

The import of humor seem to be established, both for the organization and the successful organizational member. Ellis summarily stated:

> Humor is a most effective--yet frequently neglected--tool for handling the ticklish situations in our lives. It can be used for patching up differences, apologizing, saying "no," criticizing, getting the other fellow to do what you want without a loss of face...For some jobs, it's the only tool that can succeed [6, p. 26].

Given this advocation for humor in management, the next section will review the literature concerning women and humor.

Generally, differences in the usage of and appreciation for humor exist between women and men. Over two decades ago, Grotjahn [10] stated that tradition supposes women to be incapable of even retelling a joke; that a young women will frighten a male if she demonstrates her wit. In the same year, the research of More and Roberts [18] found that males perceived cartoons to be funnier than did the female respondents. Chapman and Gadfield [1] stated that their research and most studies have elicited higher ratings of funniness from male respondents. Several other studies have found that females were significantly less positive than males in evaluating humorous stimuli [4; 14; 17].

Hassett and Houlihan surveyed over fourteen thousand readers of Psychology Today to learn why individuals find some jokes funny and others not. Among other findings, they reported:

> Not only did men, in general, like our jokes better, but there were fascinating differences in the kinds of jokes men and women preferred...While sexual jokes were the most popular category for both sexes, men liked the ones in our survey substantially more than women did...Men also preferred our ethnic and wordplay jokes, while the sexes were equally amused by hostility. The only type of humor that women clearly preferred...was the silly joke. This finding, too, is consistent with previous studies that show a female preference for the absurd [12, p. 69].

As mentioned above, several authors have posited that women rate absurd humor as being more funny than do men [9; 21]. The preference of men for sexual humor is also well documented [9; 16; 27]. As Duncan indicated, "Sex, ethnic origin, and similar factors will influence how humor is perceived and interpreted" [5, p. 140].

The literature addressing humor and the businesswoman is quite limited, almost nonexistent. Crain reported that middle- and upper-level management women admit that humor has been beneficial. Yet, Crain pointed out the difficulty women have communicating with humor.

> Women specifically have a difficult time with it since their cultural training tends to suppress early social assertiveness, which appears to lay the groundwork for easy expression of adult humor. And traditionally, our culture has encouraged women to respond to humor, rather then be the source of it. In fact, when 200 top executives were asked to select 10 reasons why women should not be placed in top corporate positions, "lack of sense of humor" ranked high on the list [3, p. 6].

The more prescriptive books for women in management offer contradictory advice. Harragan advocated that humor should be avoided.

> One amazing fact appears when a woman collects a garland of management prose: not a single phrase or idiom is witty or amusing. The language of business is deadly serious. Any halting linguistic who dares laugh or poke fun at a business communique may expect to be told "to get down to business," that is, be serious. Management males, established or aspiring, are a singularly humorless bunch [11, pp. 98-99].

Foxworth also suggested that if a woman has "an overactive sense of humor, it's better to keep it on hold in most business situations" [8, p. 114]. She continued that, when in doubt concerning humor, the best policy is do not communicate it.

Yet, Newton stressed the benefit of humor: "A lubricant for relations between and among people. No wonder a sense of humor is so highly prized in the business world. If you've got it, flaunt it!" [19, p. 65]. Similarly, Thompson and Wood [28] viewed laughter as power, a chance to overcome misery with humor. A recent article in Business Week offered that a women giving a speech "...should not be afraid that offering an occasional quip (not lengthy prepared joke) will make it seem that they are trying to be one of the boys. Men have a greater respect for women who demonstrate a sense of humor..." [24, p. 94].

Thus, the literature seems to suggest not only a value to the use of humor by people in a business situation, but propensity for women to be less likely to use this technique than their male counterparts.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate male-female differences in the use of humor as a technique to ameliorate a potentially awkward social situation at work.

The survey sample consisted of 156 male and 106 female undergraduate business students from a major university business school. An instrument containing 15 hypothetical incidents was developed. Each incident placed the respondent in job-related circumstances involving a colleague caught in a potentially embarrassing situation; i.e., "a colleague's briefcase flies open, spilling papers all over the hallway."

Respondents to the survey were asked to indicate the likelihood of their response to the hypothetical situations in terms of 3 response categories: ignoral ("I would avoid looking at him and keep on walking"); helpfulness ("I would stop and help him pick up his papers"); or use of humor ("I would tease him about being a master paper shuffler").

The respondent used the following 7-point scale to numerically indicate the probable strength of response to each of the 3 response categories in every hypothetical situation:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Mildly Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

The sequence of the 3 response options were varied for each of the 15 hypothetical situations. Pretesting of the instrument verified wording clarity of situational descriptions and accompanying responses, as well as assuring proper perception on the part of the respondents of which responses indicated an ignoral, helping, or humorous response.

RESULTS

The two populations were tested for equal variances in responses, and the null hypothesis of equality was rejected. The nonparametric Behrens-Fisher statistic was therefore used to test for differences in the mean scores of the populations for the three response categories (humor, helping, and ignoral).

Table 1 presents the mean scores (for the sum of all 15 hypothetical situations) and p-values for the Behrens-Fisher t-tests.

TABLE 1

Mean Scores and p-values For The Three Response Categories

	Humor Response	Helping Response	Ignoral Response
	X	X	X
Males (n=156)	41.97	72.16	51.33
	37.91	75.85	52.78
Females (n=106)	R	R	R
	.0126	.0003	.2033

The test indicates (as shown in Table 1) a significant difference at the .05 confidence level between male and female respondents for the humor response category and the helping response catagory. Males and females did not differ significantly for the ignoral response. The male humor response was significantly higher than the female humor response; females had a significantly higher helping response.

Specifically, male scores on the humor response were significantly higher than the female scores in that category, whereas females had a significantly higher mean score to the helping response category than did males.

DISCUSSION

This research effort is certainly exploratory and rough in nature. The complexity of any humor situation (timing, appropriateness, familiarity with others in the situation, the personality of the respondent, and other variables) goes far beyond the attempt of this paper. Indeed, individuals may differ in reactions to types of humor (ethnic, sexual, wordplay, hostile, etc.), as was discussed in the Hassett and Houlihan article [12]. Given these complexities, some observations can still be drawn from this research effort.

This study seems to verify what most of the non-empirical literature has hypothesized about women's use of humor; namely, that humor is less a part of the females' communications pattern. Indeed, the results would suggest that women may have a lower propensity to use humor as a part of their professional repertoire. However, it must be noted that this sample was comprised of college women asked how they might respond in certain scenarios.

To the extent that women fail to take advantage of humor for interpersonal effectiveness, it may be incumbent on the woman professional to consciously, though judiciously, respond with humor in appropriate situations. Since the literature review indicates that the use of forced humor can be interpersonally damaging when used insensitively or indiscriminately, humor would appear to be professionally appropriate only when communicated spontaneously, informally, and in interpersonally supportive ways.

Business schools might do well to re-evaluate their traditionally conservative approach to preparing students (both male and female) for managerial success. A recent commentary in Time magazine placed part of the blame for humorless young executives on today's business schools [20]. A poll revealed that business school deans are apparently more concerned with instilling "tough-mindedness" than a sense of humor in students. Perhaps educators should reassess the importance to professional success of such communicative skills as humor.

Clearly there is a need for more empirical research into male-female differences in the use of humor. While only an exploratory effort, this study lends credence to the concept that women are less inclined to use humor in professional situations. Future research might do well to focus on the source of these differences and their professional consequences, specifically addressing the issues enumerated earlier in this section.

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CAN SEX-BIASED COMMUNICATION AFFECT BUSINESS STUDENTS' CAREER DECISIONS?

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ABSTRACT

Sex-biased language has been the object of debate for the past several years—does the type of communication have an effect on the way a message is received? Using a sex-neutral and sex-biased instrument, the investigators find that there is reason to believe that communication patterns can influence career choice. In particular, sex-biased language serves to reinforce sex-stereotypical behavior with respect to career choice.

INTRODUCTION

Sexist communication attacks the very core of the psyche of women and instills and perpetuates the sense of chauvinism in men. Communication, whether written, oral, or nonverbal, is the insidious creator of a self-image of second-ratedness within girls and women and of super-ratedness in boys and men. These images are all the more dangerous because their victims subconsciously accept them as being rooted in nature, as traditional 'laws' not to be broken.

Determining the extent to which sexist communication patterns influence the career choices of college freshmen will help educators to analyze why members of the opposite sex too infrequently enter non-traditional occupational programs. Perhaps this research will provide the means by which non-traditional programs can better attract members of the opposite sex. Such improvement might take the form of more sex-neutral guidance materials. It might come about as guidance counselors are unemcumbered by outdated, stereotyped attitudes concerning students' careers with respect to their sex.

This project developed an instrument to determine whether career choices have been influenced by sexist communication patterns. The instrument consisted of a pair of related instruments, one extensively validated as sex-neutral, the other deliberately sex-biased. Each half of the instrument consisted of 39 items, in which question i of the neutral instrument was contextually the same as

question i of the biased instrument. The bias was created by substituting wording in terms of a person of a specific sex for the original neutral wording.

Researchers agree that language, and hence communication patterns, can affect decisions made by males and females. For instance, an experiment on college students asked each student to illustrate the phrases "political man" and "urban man." Sixty-four percent of the students selected all-male pictures. When asked to illustrate "political behavior" or "urban life," only 50 percent of the selected pictures were all-male [4, p. 54].

A second example is more relevant to the current study and its concern that communication patterns can influence, and have influenced, the career choices of young men and women. High school students were asked to rate their interest in job advertisements. Female students showed no interest in jobs labeled 'XXXXX-man,' but showed increased interest in 'XXXXX-woman.' Male students showed no interest in jobs associated with the pronoun "she," but showed interest instead where the pronoun "he" was part of the job ad [4, p. 54].

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

Electronic searches utilizing the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) initially turned up few sources. The researchers inferred that this apparent dearth of information was the effect of descriptors which were too arcane--not descriptive enough--for this important topic. Only in retrospect could the researchers develop a search language that would produce an adequate bibliography.

There are several surveys and annotated bibliographies in this field [3,5,6]. The Sourcebook of Measures of Women's Educational Equity [5] contains descriptions of instruments dealing with many forms of sex bias, including career choice. Several of these instruments, and the texts of the projects in which they were developed and validated, were pertinent to this study.

The Sourcebook generated several leads, the best of which was to the American College Testing (ACT) Program's "Assessment of Career Development (ACD)" instruments, and to the director of the program in which they were developed, Dr. Dale Prediger.

THE ACD INSTRUMENT

The major purpose of the ACD, as stated in its accompanying user's guide, is to help counselors and administrators with two tasks.

The first purpose is obtaining information needed in developing effective guidance programs tailored to individual students. The second purpose is assessing the outcomes of career guidance programs initiated in special projects and studies [1, p. 1].

The ACD instrument deals with occupational awareness, self awareness, and career planning and decision-making skills of students. The instrument has been thoroughly tested for content validity and reliability. Details of these tests are found in the user's guide mentioned earlier [1, p. 25].

The most common form of questioning on this instrument was a statement to be completed by one of four possible multiple-choice responses. Top scores for males and females were approximately the same; bottom scores for males were lower than bottom scores for females. The user's guide speculated that this difference was due to differential reading abilities of male and female students [1, p. 35].

There were some differences in male and female scores that reflect sex role stereotyping common in American society. The Sourcebook advised that, since content validity varies from one school setting to another, potential users make final judgment of the validity of the ACD in each specific situation [5, p. 101]. Even though the instrument developers reported some stereotyping of responses by male and female students, the instrument did contain questions covering a very wide variety of job situations, with no obvious sex bias. The researchers inferred that the ACD instrument was sufficiently sex-neutral for the current project.

The researchers obtained permission from Dr. Dale J. Prediger to make extensive use of the ACD instrument, which is no longer actively used by the American College Testing Program.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE INSTRUMENT

This project selected 39 items from the ACD instrument to be used verbatim as the sex-neutral half of the instrument. These 39 items represented the least sex-stereotyped items among the 52 items in the Jobs Knowledge portion of the ACD which were of the appropriate multiple-choice format. By using the least sex-stereotyped items of the ACD, researchers assumed they were able to enhance the content validity in the current setting.

The sex-biased half of the instrument was constructed by carefully rewording each of the original 39 items. Most of the original questions referred to a person—generally not identified by sex—in a work setting. The original questions were biased by replacing this 'sexless' person with a male or female title or first name. The questions were properly paired on the two versions.

Question i of the original (sex-neutral) was reworded to become question i of the revised (sex-biased) form. Thus the completed instrument consisted of two sets of 39 questions each.

The choice of male versus female first name was dependent upon the set of occupational choices that were the responses to the question. The researchers' intent was to provide the respondents with a mixture of job situations ranging from sex-stereotyped through sex-neutral to non-traditional. The resulting mixture of first names favored females over males by approximately two to one. This balance was appropriate to the objective of presenting the variety of job situations described above, since the original ACD document contained a high proportion of traditionally male-oriented jobs.

The researchers assumed that questions constructed to present workers in non-traditional roles would enable easier detection of the effects of sexist communication patterns on career choice. Therefore, these types of questions were more common than stereotypical questions, which were in turn more common than sex-neutral questions. The specific numbers of each were 22 non-traditional, 10 stereotypical, and 7 sex-neutral. Seventeen of the 22 non-traditional employment questions place female workers in jobs ordinarily held by male workers. Questions worded toward non-traditional employment were more able to detect differences between male and female respondents. Sex-stereotyped job situation questions were less discriminating than the non-traditional questions. Sex-neutral questions were the least discriminating. If sex-biased communications do have an influence upon career choice, then sex-biased communications would influence respondents' answers to the proposed questionnaire. The effects of the sex-biased communications patterns would be that (1) male and female respondents would answer the same (biased) question differently, and (2) males (females) responding to a biased question would answer differently from males (females) responding to the respective sex-neutral question.

INSTRUMENT TEST

The completed instrument was administered to students enrolled in a freshman-level Introduction to Business course. These students were not assumed to be a valid cross-section of college freshmen. They were, for the most part, students who would later major in some field of business administration. The researchers expected that their knowledge of careers and of jobs content would be higher than that of college freshmen as a whole. This population contained a good representation of males and females, and (by observation only) a balanced representation of blacks and whites. Altogether 221 responses were received, of which 86 were from female respondents and 135 from male respondents. One hundred twelve sex-biased questionnaires were completed; 109 sex-neutral questionnaires were completed. Forty-six

of the 86 female respondents answered the sex-biased form; 40 completed the neutral form. Sixty-six males completed the sex-baised form; the remaining 69 males completed the sex-neutral form. These values indicate that approximately half of all males, and approximately half of all females, answered each half of the questionnaire. Thus there was no bias in the distribution of questionnaires between male and female respondents.

A contingency table was constructed to illustrate differences in the rate of correct responses by males and by females to both biased and neutral forms of each item.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The basic statistical test employed was a Chi-square Test of Uniformity. Each of the 39 items was tested, using the data of the contingency tables previously developed. Thirteen of the 39 items showed differences from a uniform response rate at the 0.05 level of significance. Two of these thirteen items will be examined in detail, to illustrate the effects of sex-biased language on career choice.

Item 26 and 31 will now be examined in detail. First, both the neutral and the biased versions of each item are stated. The relevant contingency table for each item pair will be shown. Then the results, as shown in that contingency table, will be discussed.

Item 26, Neutral Version

____26. Mary took several business courses while in high school. English was her poorest subject. Her favorite outside activity was the Dramatic Club. She is a well-groomed, poised, and alert person who likes to be around people. She now holds one of the following jobs. Which one seems MOST likely?

a. secretary
b. receptionist
c. stenographer
d. hotel maid

Item 26, Biased Version

____26. Bruce took several business courses while in high school. English was his poorest subject. His favorite outside activity was the Dramatic Club. He is a well-groomed, poised, and alert person who likes to be around people. He now holds one of the following jobs. Which one seems MOST likely?

a. secretary
b. receptionist
c. stenographer
d. hotel porter

Percent Correct Answers, Item 26

	MALE	FEMALE
NEUTRAL	65.2	60.0
BIASED	28.8	30.4

OVERALL = 45.9

The preceding table shows that over 60 percent of all respondents correctly identified 'receptionist' as the best response to the neutral version of the question. The biased item changed the name of the subject from female to male. Less than 30 percent of all respondents chose the correct response to the biased version. In this example, male and female respondents had approximately equal rates of correct responses on the neutral item; males and females had significantly lower percent correct responses on the biased item. This is an indication that the respondents, male and female alike, were much more reluctant to view a male than a female as a receptionist. If changing simply the name of the subject can influence respondents' views on the career appropriate for persons of similar training, then sex-biased communication patterns exist.

Item 31, Neutral Version

____31. It is usually necessary to enter an apprenticeship program to become a--

a. dry cleaner
b. florist
c. plumber
d. bank teller

Item 31, Biased Version

____31. Mrs. Jarvis is about to enter one of the job fields below. In which one is it usually necessary to enter an apprenticeship program?
a. dry cleaner
b. florist
c. plumber
d. bank teller

Percent Correct Answers, Item 31

	MALE	FEMALE
NEUTRAL	78.3	60.0
BIASED	47.0	37.0

OVERALL = 56.8

The neutral version of this item makes no reference to the sex of the subject. The correct answer is 'plumber.' Over 78 percent of the males correctly answered this question, while only about 60 percent of the females did so. The average, weighted by the number of male and female respondents, correct response rate was almost 72 percent. One possible explanation for the higher correct response rate among males might be their greater familiarity with jobs involving apprenticeship programs. However, a more important difference in scores is seen, not between neutral and biased versions of the item. While the correct answer rate was 71 percent on the neutral version, it was less than 43 percent on the biased version. The obvious explanation for such a significant reduction in scores is that the respondents were not willing to place a woman--Mrs. Jarvis--into the traditionally male dominated occupation of plumbing.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the research implied that communication patterns do influence career choices. When presented with a sex-neutral job situation, male and female respondents were more likely to select the correct outcome than when presented with a sex-biased, but otherwise comparable, situation. Both male and female respondents were reluctant to place workers into non-traditional roles. This tendency would imply that students consider primarily, if not exclusively, those career options that have traditionally been held by their own sex.

The inferences drawn from this research should be more carefully tested by using a broader population of students. If further study supports the results of this research, then guidance counselors throughout the nation should evaluate their career guidance materials for communication patterns--such as sexist wording--that might prevent a student from considering all possible career options.

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PART 4

INNOVATIVE TEACHING AND EVALUATION

VIDEO CASES

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ABSTRACT

Video cases, short tapes depicting realistic business situations, provide a new way to develop class discussion of business writing problems. This paper discusses the campus production of these short tapes and their use in business writing classes.

During the past decade, the use of videotapes as teaching tools has greatly increased. Videotape is a simple, relatively inexpensive, and yet highly versatile teaching technology, useful in a wide variety of educational settings.

The nursing and community health fields have especially benefited from the use of the so-called "trigger films"; that is, short, open-ended, high-impact evocative films or tapes that can readily generate group discussions. [1] The films and tapes visually depict for students real-life situations that can prompt vigorous class discussion. Thus, instructors can move away from standard printed textbook cases into realistic vignettes that provide more immediacy than the text can.

Because the concept of trigger films--realistic simulation of problems students will face on the job--seemed eminently appropriate for business writing, the decision was made to produce some videotapes for use in the business writing classes at The University of Akron. Some 300 students take the course each semester, using one standard textbook. Videotapes seemed to be a way to develop classroom variety in exercises and assignments. Business writing students, accustomed to written cases in which most of the pertinent information is provided, would, instead, view a communication problem as it developed through conversation and events.

The University of Akron's Educational Research and Development Fund provides small grants to faculty who wish to develop teaching materials for classroom use. A simple application for money for videotapes and studio time was approved. The university audio-visual service then scheduled studio time and technicians for a one-day taping session. A

cooperative professor in the theater department supplied volunteer student actors for the project.

Since a different set was needed for each vignette, the taping schedule allotted two hours for each. The actors rehearsed their lines while the sets were changed.

The first vignette, "A New Course," is set in a college classroom. After class, two professors discuss a letter that one of them must send to community residents. The letter will announce a new business writing course being offered in the continuing education division. Because the course is being offered for the first time, the professor teaching it is concerned with writing an appealing announcement. The course is scheduled for two nights a week, and the professor is concerned that working people may not be interested in attending a class twice a week; he wants his letter to overcome any such resistance. The conversation centers on his concerns but does not give precisely the details of time, place, and course content. The students are to add any needed details as they create an appealing letter for this problem.

This video case requires both an appealing announcement and a good-news letter. There needs to be some sales appeal since a simple announcement may not create enough interest for the readers. Positive tone needs to be present throughout. The videotape is most successful in class after students have been in the business writing course seven to eight weeks. By then, students should be able to develop the content of the problem.

The second vignette, "Relocating the Plant," is set in an office. Three managers are having coffee as they discuss the upcoming move to new plant facilities 15 miles outside of town. The new plant will have expanded production capacity, and the managers expect some 50 new jobs to result. In addition, the modern technology at the new location and the plentiful free parking are attractive. One manager is not as enthusiastic as the others. She has been delegated to write the official announcement to all employees, and she knows that not all employees will be happy with the news. Many employees live close to the old plant, take the bus to work, and will not be easily able to reach the new location outside regular bus service.

This memo problem fits in with the bad-news section of the course because of the employees' trouble with the new plant location. The audience, however, is mixed because for some employees the plant move is entirely good news. The indirect approach is needed in the memo--embedding the "no bus" theme in the midst of reader benefits. Also, more information than in the first vignette must be developed by the students for this video case.

The third vignette, "The Big Sale," is set in a hardware store. Two clerks are discussing the upcoming end-of-the-year sale. One clerk has been told by the manager to write a sales flyer to be distributed to area residents. She struggles to decide what to emphasize in the flyer as the other clerk offers suggestions. They try to create a strong, exciting opening but can't agree on an approach.

This video case makes students search for a highly persuasive approach--the AIDA sales letter plan. The conversation between the two clerks rejects some traditional openings for sales messages and forces the students to be more creative. Of the three videotapes, "The Big Sale" is the only one that shows the characters involved in the writing process of selecting and rejecting ideas, content, and style.

Because they are so short, each vignette can be shown several times in class so students are able to notice all the pertinent information being provided within the conversations. As an in-class writing exercise, each vignette can involve the whole class in brainstorming what information to include in the message and how to include it. The class must decide what details to add that were not discussed on the tape. Students can then draft the message in class. Eventually, students can read aloud and compare their messages.

As out-of-class assignments, the vignettes also provide variety from the textbook cases. Students can brainstorm in class as a group about needed information. They can then go home and write an appropriate message. Finally, they can turn in a message for the instructor to grade.

These video cases provide attractive and stimulating additions to the business writing course after several weeks of concentration on a traditional textbook. The students, who usually are more visually oriented than they are print oriented, can "see" a communication problem presented as it might occur on the job.

In addition, the video cases function as listening exercises. The students are not given neat narratives with clear details. They must listen carefully, decide what information is important, and take notes for later use. Most important, the cases are outside any textbook structure and, therefore, are not included in chapters labeled good news or negative messages. The students must analyze the situation as it unfolds on the tape and identify for themselves the probable effect on the intended audience. They then decide on a writing approach to handle the communication problem. Video cases, thus, provides students with the stimulus to improve their problem-solving and analytical abilities.

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HOLISTIC GRADING IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The principal problem of this study was to compare student achievement in business letter writing and traditional coursework in business communications courses following an outline excluding remedial English usage instruction with student achievement in business communications courses following an outline including remedial English usage instruction. This study compared the reliability of holistic grading with analytical grading when used to evaluate student achievement in business letter writing. This study was conducted at Montana State University and Eastern Montana College. Students were given Barton's Language Skills Test for college students in business communications as a pretest. The pretest also included the writing of two business letters. Control groups received no formal instruction in remedial English fundamentals. The experimental group received instruction in remedial English fundamentals. The experimental group received instruction in remedial English fundamentals by the lecture-discussion method. After both groups completed the business letter writing unit, they took the postinstructional tests. These tests consisted of Barton's Language Skills Test and the writing of two business letters. The reliability of holistic and analytical grading was compared. Sample letters were scored by the holistic grading method by trained readers. Then these letters were scored analytically by the same trained readers. The reliability of these methods was determined by using Kuder-Richardson's formula. The findings of this study also support the use of holistic grading for the judging of student achievement in business letter writing. Two-way analysis of variance was used to statistically compare student achievement of the groups which received remedial English usage instruction with those students who did not receive this instruction. The findings of this study indicate that formal instruction in remedial English usage does not significantly affect a student's ability to write a business letter. However, this instruction does significantly increase student formal knowledge of English usage.

INTRODUCTION

Business communications professors, like any other professors of writing, have found that in order to improve student writing, students must be given ample opportunities to develop writing skill. In order to accomplish this, the students must be given an adequate number of writing assignments throughout the term. Research completed by Inman (1970) and by Dalton (1976) reached these conclusions: (1) It appears that English fundamentals and (2) frequent writing practice seemingly do not increase knowledge of the principles of business writing. Inman observed that: "Since the students who write six letters exhibited approximately the same amount of improvement in writing skill as students who write four times as many letters, improvement in writing skill should not be attributed to quantity of writing assignments [5:1970:6].

These findings suggest that business communications students should be assigned at least six letters throughout the course so that they will have the opportunity to develop skill in business letter writing. Assigning six letters per student per quarter still results in an enormous amount of grading to be completed by the business communications professor each quarter. If the average number of students per class is 30, this would mean that just in the business letter unit, the professor would have 180 letters to grade. This tremendous workload has been a constant source of concern for business communications professors.

This concern does not end with the grading of student papers for grading purposes. It also extends into the research realm of business communications. For research studies which in some way are concerned with the writing abilities of students this workload has a tremendous impact. In order to adequately judge a student's writing ability, a writing test must be given. While objective tests are a valid measure for judging a student's knowledge of the rules of English usage and other objective material, they are not a valid measure for judging a student's writing ability. McColly feels that objective tests, "simply are not measures of writing, for the purpose of the judging of writing ability they should be ignored [6:1970:149]."

This concern for the grading of writing tests was addressed in a study completed during Winter Quarter 1983, at Montana State University and Eastern Montana College. However, this was not the principle problem addressed in the research. The primary problem was to compare student achievement in business letter writing and traditional course work in a business communications course following an outline excluding remedial English usage instruction with student achievement in a business communications course following an outline including remedial English usage instruction. (The results of this segment of the research will not be reported in this article.) The second problem of the study was to compare the reliability of holistic grading with analytical grading when used to evaluate student achievement in business letter writing.

HOLISTIC VS. ANALYTICAL GRADING

Analytical grading consists of the evaluator assigning points based on a scale or key with each category receiving a certain number of points. For example, in the studies of Schlattman (1976) and Pickard (1972) letters were graded in the areas of purpose, tone, choice of words, English usage, and organization. In analytical grading, each of these specific areas contributes to the overall grade of the paper."[6:1970:151].

However, McColly does point out that research has shown that "when a judge thought he was responding to some specific quality he was actually responding to his general impressions or to the overall quality of the essay."[6:1970:151]

Holistic grading means the scoring of a whole piece of writing based on the theory that the whole piece of writing is greater than its parts [4:1979:10]. This method of evaluation considers a piece of writing as a whole; it is not divided into its various parts. Such a method examines the piece of writing on its total merit rather than as a sum of its parts [2:1982]. Holistic grading evaluates each paper for total effectiveness.

With holistic grading, papers are graded by use of a simple numerical scale. The two most frequently used are the four- and six-point scales. In each of these scales one point is low, and either four or six points is high. McColly and Remstad conducted a study to determine which scale was more reliable. They recommend the use of the four-point scale because with the six-point scale there was greater difficulty in orienting the evaluators to the use of the scale and in their actual use of it. They go on to say that these two factors make the four-point scale quicker and easier to use [7:1965:55].

The four-point scale could be interpreted as [8:1966:43]:

1. Obviously below a reasonable standard
2. Not sufficient promise or competence to be considered in the upper half
3. Clearly competent, promise of effective performance
4. Superior; not perfect but very good; effective

In measuring growth in writing for criterion performances, holistic grading on a four-or six-point scale appears to be superior because as "the number of points on a scale is increased and the rater is forced to make finer distinctions he becomes less reliable. There is more chance of variability between his rating on one theme and his rating on another just like it, as well as between his ratings and those of other raters."[7:1965:55]

Opinions are varied (as reported by the Journal of Education Research) and do not point to either the analytical grading method or the holistic grading method as being superior.

Opinion is divided over the comparative value of judging writing-test essays simply for general merit or for performance on each of several specific factors. The validity of a single rating is not questioned; the issue is whether or not an array of ratings is not more discriminating. Research findings indicate that the controversy may be tour de force, because ratings for specific factors tend to collapse entirely into a single rating through the halo effect [7:1970:148].

Even though Pickard used analytical grading, instructions to the evaluators included this statement: "You may reread the letter for the fine points asked on the evaluation sheet, but let your first reaction be your major guide."[9:1972:173]

It appears that the more simple the grading procedure, the more reliable and valid the results will be. Pickard supports this statement [9:1972:23-24].

No complicated patterns were prescribed for rating the letter because of the need to keep the workload of the evaluators as light as possible and to the rating exercise as simple as possible. By rating the letters one at a time on all thirty-two questions, there was, of course, the possibility that one facet of the letter could influence the ratings of another facet of the letter. For example, the tone of a letter could very well influence the ratings for choice of words; and word choice could influence the tone of the ratings. Such influence is impossible to avoid even by rating the letters on one category at a time because all the categories are spread throughout each letter, and a rater would be exposed to all categories each time he read a letter, regardless of the category he was rating at any particular reading. Furthermore, the various categories are interdependent on one another. For example, general tone of letter is "good" or "bad" by virtue of the words chosen to express the tone. Therefore, the simplest and the easiest pattern for evaluating the letters was considered the best.

These statements would appear to support the case for the use of holistic grading for the evaluation of business letters written by students. Interdependence of ratings would lead to the "halo effect" if analytical grading were used.

THE JUDGING OF WRITING TESTS

The actual grading of writing tests leads to questions of validity and reliability. There are several sources of error which must be controlled. The design of a study that will grade writing is critical. McColly points out several areas which must be considered in order to make the study as reliable and as valid as possible [6:1979:154-155]. These areas are listed below; they were incorporated into the design of this study. They included:

1. The use of trained readers
2. The use of established grading criteria
3. The use of pre- and post-instructional writing tests
4. The use of writing samples from each student both on the pre- and post-instructional writing tests
5. The randomization of the papers
6. The simultaneous grading of the papers by the evaluators
7. The evaluators must work independently
8. The simultaneous grading of pre- and post-instructional writing tests

WHICH GRADING METHOD IS MORE RELIABLE?

This was the one general question answered in the research study--which grading method is more reliable in evaluating business letter writing--analytical or holistic grading?

This question was answered by conducting two consecutive grading sessions. First, a systematic stratified random sample of 48 papers was selected from the 580 business writing pretests and posttests. A separate session was conducted for each grading method. After each training session, evaluators were asked to grade the 48 sample papers as quickly as possible. The holistic grading session was conducted first. The analytical grading session was conducted immediately following the holistic session. To judge the reliability of these writing tests a Kudor-Richardson formula was used. The formula was:

$$r = \frac{K}{K-1}\left[1 - \frac{\Sigma\sigma i^2}{Pi^2}\right]$$

K represents the number of independent readings of the letters (in this case, 3), p^2 is the variance of the student scores from a particular evaluator, $\Sigma\sigma i^2$ is the form of the letter variance for all letters and Pi^2 is the variance of the sums of the rating from all evaluators [3:1972:419].

The calculated r's from the 48 sample papers were:

Holistic grading r = .759
Analytical grading r = .787

In addition to calculating the r's for each grading method, accurate time was kept for each method. These calculations included time for the training session and the time it actually took to grade the 48 papers by each method. This information appears in Table 1.

The instruction and training time for analytical grading took 84 minutes. The actual grading time of the sample papers by analytical grading took an average of 162.33 minutes for a total average

time of 246.33. The instruction and training session for holistic grading took 23 minutes. The actual grading of the sample papers by holistic grading took an average of 24.66 minutes, for a total average of 47.66 minutes. Analytical grading took 5.27 times as long as holistic grading to complete the training session and to grade the 48 sample papers.

TABLE 1

Holistic vs. Analytical Grading

	Time Data Training Time	Grading time for 48 sample papers
Holistic Grading		
Evaluator #1	23 minutes	25 minutes
Evaluator #2	23 minutes	23 minutes
Evaluator #3	23 minutes	26 minutes
Analytical Grading		
Evaluator #1	84 minutes	172 minutes
Evaluator #2	84 minutes	169 minutes
Evaluator #3	84 minutes	146 minutes

CONCLUSIONS REACHED IN THE STUDY

Because the magnitude of the difference between the two r's was so small and because the magnitude of the difference in the time it took to use the grading methods was so great, it was decided to use holistic grading to score the pre- and post-instructional business letter writing tests for this study. Based upon these findings, it can be concluded that holistic grading is of equal reliability to analytical grading when used to judge business letter writing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

For research purposes where hundreds of papers are graded, it is important that these papers be graded in one training session so that contaminating factors do not enter into the reader's evaluation of the letters [6:1970:154]. With the time required to complete the grading of business letters analytically, it would be impossible to complete an entire set of research writing tests in one grading session. This could have a significant effect on the reliability of analytical grading. Holistic grading would enable researchers to grade a large number of letters or papers in a minimal amount of time. It would also reduce the affects of contaminating factors on the grading of

papers. Moreover, holistic grading would allow researchers to expand sample size.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLASSROOM

The use of holistic grading would allow business communications professors to grade papers in a very short time frame. With holistic grading, an instructor would be able to grade papers for a class of 25 in less than 30 minutes. This would allow the professor to assign more writing projects throughout the term. It also takes the drudgery out of grading business communications writing assignments.

The standards for grading the papers holistically can be established in two ways. The first method uses pre-established standards. The second method establishes new standards each time a group of papers is scored.

When using pre-established standards, the instructor would set the standards for the scores before the class began. These standards would not be changed throughout the term. As professors score papers, they establish or develop an intuition as to what is a 4 paper, a 3 paper, etc. All papers would be scored based upon these standards. As business communications professors we develop, sometimes unconsciously, what we feel an excellent paper is. When we grade analytically, this feeling tends to have an affect on all of the grades that we give to the paper. With holistic grading that first impression becomes the grade for the letter. It is not difficult to determine the one and four papers. It is difficult to determine the difference between the two and three papers. In determining if a paper should receive a grade of three or two, the major consideration is that the "two" papers do not show "sufficient promise of competence." Papers which receive a grade of three show that the writer is clearly competent and has promise of effective performance. This promise of effective performance then becomes key to the grade placed upon the paper.

With the second method each class is graded based on the performance of the individual class members. No pre-established standards are used. With this method the instructor would read the letters through placing them in two stacks (the upper-half and the lower-half). The instructor would then read the upper half papers, dividing them into two stacks. Next the instructor would read the lower half dividing them into two stacks. The instructor would then closely examine the lower upper-half papers and the upper lower-half papers to determine if any should be moved. The scores on the paper are determined by the stack (e.g. the upper upper-half papers would be fours).

Some professors have expressed concern that students will not receive adequate feedback if holistic grading is used. A training

session for students is a prerequisite. Students need to know what holistic grading is, and they need to see examples of letters for each scoring category. In this way, they know why they received a particular score. In addition, after the papers have been scored, it would be advisable for the professor to go back to make comments and corrections on the letters as necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Since business letters often are short and can be graded in one session, research should be completed to determine the effect of using holistic grading for the scoring of reports.

Further studies should be conducted into the relationship of holistic versus analytical grading when used for the grading of business letters. Based on the findings of this study, it appears that holistic grading is equal in reliability to analytical grading. Because of the time savings obtained when using holistic grading, holistic grading offers business communications professors an opportunity to save an enormous amount of time in the grading of business letters. Specifically, a study should be designed to determine if students receive adequate feedback when holistic grading is used to judge their business writing assignments.

SUMMARY

Holistic grading has the potential for increasing the reliability of grading business communications papers. It could also allow professors to score more papers throughout the term for each student. It is a grading method which should be further used in research in business communications. It should also be the subject of research studies to determine its effectiveness in the classroom.

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USING PERSONAL COMPUTER FOR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Textual analysis of students' writing consumes much time of business communication teachers. Both a saving of some of this time and an increase in the scope of this textual analysis might result from using appropriate microcomputer software programs. The results of using Punctuation and Style and The Word Plus, both by Oasis Systems, for textual analysis of business communication students' writing are described in this report.

PRELIMINARY REQUIREMENTS

Students must have access to either a microcomputer or a terminal on a network system and the teacher needs a microcomputer. College of Business students at Arizona State University have access to a computer laboratory in which 40 IBM Personal Computers are linked by a Nestar local area network. Using the word processing program WordStar, a student prepares a file for each writing assignment and saves this file on his/her own diskette. The teacher has a 256K IBM-PC with two 360KB diskette drives, an IBM dot-matrix printer, and of course, the necessary software programs for a textual analysis.

Students' prior experience with personal computers and knowledge of word processing and WordStar is of course helpful; however, it is not necessary. About 25 p e rcent of all students whose experiences are reported in this paper had no prior experience with personal computers and about 45 p e rcent had no prior knowledge of word processing and WordStar. A 15-minute tutorial, which is available to a student upon logging on the computer, provides the student with minimal knowledge of IBM-PC usage. A six-page tutorial prepared by the teacher provides minimal knowledge of WordStar usage. When formatting is limited to the default margins that were set for WordStar and students' input does not include visual aids or other unusual arrangements of information beyond traditional sentences, paragraphs, and headings, students can produce correctly formatted and edited messages with one hour of hands-on computer instruction.

THE WORD PLUS

The first software program used for textual analysis was The Word Plus, which is classified as a spelling checker although it performs several other vocabulary functions. The functions with a textual analysis application are Spell, Word Count, and Word Frequency. Several options of the Spell module, which are useful, are as follows:

1. List misspelled words to monitor
2. List misspelled words to monitor and printer
3. List misspelled words to printer
4. Ignore words in all capital letters

Although The Word Plus can mark misspelled words in a student's file, listing misspelled words to printer was more beneficial. Later the student would be asked not only to mark the misspelled word in the printout but also to correct the misspelled word. In business writing, function 4 provides a useful option.

The Word Count module rapidly counts and identifies the number of words in a student's file. The program defines a word as "any sequence of alphabetic characters (including apostrophes and hyphens) surrounded by nonalphabetic characters." Although this module does not provide for a printout of the number, the number can be easily written on other material that is returned to the student.

The Word Frequency module identifies the frequency of occurrence of each word in a student's file. A printed copy can be obtained either by frequency of occurrence or by alphabetic order. The frequency of occurrence order can be a useful instructional tool because, first, to identify for a student the scope of his/her vocabulary and the frequency of usage of each word that he/she used is most likely new information for the student. Second, now that this information is known, several business writing characteristics, both advantageous and disadvantageous, can be illustrated for the student by using his/her vocabulary; e.g., the relationships between multisyllable words and either increased complexity or increased simplicity. Students no longer need to rely only on textbook or other impersonal sources for examples of effective vocabulary characteristics; they can read a list of their own vocabulary for examples.

PUNCTUATION AND STYLE

The second software program used for textual analysis is Punctuation and Style, which is described as "a set of two programs that will catch errors in punctuation and also help you improve your writing style." The latter objective, which is accomplished by the Phrase module, prints to the screen three writing characteristics in a student's file: first, any phrase in a student's file that matches one in Phrase's dictionary; second, another choice or choices of the just identified phrase; and third, the student's sentence in which

the phrase occurs and the phrase enclosed with brackets. Figure 1 shows the appearance of these three items on a monitor.

FIGURE 1

- -

A NUMBER OF : SEVERAL <OR> MANY <OR> SOME

For those who already have experience using WordStar, it should be noted that there are {a number of} commands that function differently on the Nestar networks used at Arizona State University than they do on a stand-alone PC.

- -

Phrase's dictionary has a few more than 500 phrases each of which is either a single word or several words in a certain order. Punctuation and Style's documentation identifies each of these 500-plus "commonly misused" phrases and lists each phrase in one of eight classifications: (1) awkward phrases, (2) cliches, (3) erroneous phrases, (4) folksy phrases, (5) muddy phrases, (6) pompous phrases, (7) redundant phrases, and (8) wordy phrases. Since these classification titles can not be identified in any printout, they serve at best as convenient classifications for the teacher. Adding to and editing phrases in Phrase's dictionary is possible.

When used, Phrase shows on the screen the previously mentioned three writing characteristics and offers several options. A user may choose "mark," which results in Phrase marking the sentence in a student's file in which the phrase occurs and then proceeding to read the remainder of the file. Second, a user may choose "ignore," which results in Phrase proceeding to read the remainder of a student's file. Third, a user may choose "print," which results in a printed copy of the information showing on the screen after which Phrase proceeds to read the remainder of the file. Fourth, a user may choose "suppress," which results in a continued ignoring of the sentence by Phrase; i.e., the suppressed sentence will not be matched by Phrase again.

A useful choice is "print," the third option, for it gives the student the responsibility of finding the phrase in the original copy and then deciding whether to accept the program's suggestion. An alternative is "mark," for it marks the phrase in the student's file as well as adding choices at the end of the paragraph in which the phrase occurs.

A sub-routine of Phrase is called Passive. This program identifies any sentence with (1) auxiliary verb of the form "to be" and (2) each preposition in that sentence. These identifications accomplish two objectives: to identify sentences with passive voice and to identify sentences that might be written more concisely. After

Passive's identification of a sentence with a form of the verb "to be," the program provides three options. First, the information may be ignored; second, be printed; or third, be marked in a student's file. Perhaps most useful to the student is the receipt of a printed copy. This feedback, a sample copy of which is in Figure 2, can be correlated with class discussion about both passive voice and verbose sentences.

FIGURE 2

- -

FOR : preposition
ARE : TO BE, PRESENT TENSE
OF : preposition
ON : preposition
AT : preposition

{For} those who already have experience using WordStar, it should be noted that there {are} a number {of} commands that function differently {on} the Nestar networks used {at} Arizona State University than they do {on} a stand-alone PC.

- -

The remaining module in Punctuation and Style is Cleanup. Its purpose is to identify the mechanical errors in a student's file. Twenty-five error messages in Cleanup, a list of which is in Figure 3, represent five categories of mechanical errors: (1) capitalization; (2) punctuation; (3) quotes, brackets, and toggles; (4) numeric errors; and (5) other errors. When Cleanup is applied to a student's file, the program searches for mechanical errors within these classifications. When one of the 25 errors is found, the error's location and content are shown on the screen. The user has two options: the identified error may be ignored or it may be marked in a student's file. After either decision, the program proceeds to search the student's file for the next error.

If the user decides to identify an error, the program marks the error in the student's file. Cleanup's error markings are identified by the number 1 through 25. The error may be marked in one of two ways. One way shows the error's number at the error's location and the error's description at the end of the paragraph. The alternative shows only the error's number at the error's location. Marking a student's file is the only way to give a student an identification of Cleanup's error messages.

CONCLUSION

Computerized textual analysis of business communication students' writing can become a part of the writing evaluation process.

FIGURE 3

Cleanup's Error Message Summary

1. Mixed upper and lower case letters
2. Missing capital letter
3. Misplaced punctuation
4. Punctuation belongs inside quotes
5. Missing end of sentence punctuation, or extraneous space
6. Too much punctuation
7. Isolated punctuation
8. Ellipsis points should be spaced: ". . . ."
9. Unbalanced double quote marks in above paragraph
10. Unbalanced parentheses in above paragraph
11. Unbalanced square brackets in above paragraph
12. Unbalanced curly braces in above paragraph
13. Unbalanced bracket characters in above paragraph
14. Unbalanced toggle characters in above paragraph
15. Unmatched "ignore" switch. Complete file not checked
16. Three digits must follow a comma
17. At least one digit should precede the decimal point
18. Commas do not belong to the right of the decimal point
19. Missing white space
20. Abbreviation expected here
21. This word is repeated
22. No comma should follow a dash
23. No period should follow a dash
24. A dash is never preceded by white space
25. Two spaces should follow end of sentence

This application needs, first, the identification of writing characteristics evaluated by the software and an arrangement of these characteristics in order of complexity; second, the application of only some of the software's textual analyses to each writing assignment so that a set of writing objectives are progressively evaluated from one assignment to the next; and third, the substitution of the software's textual analyses for some but not for all hand-marked teacher evaluations.

Given the textual analysis software now available for personal computer usage, using the computer for textual analysis and marking of business students' writing only supplements the traditional hand-marked, teacher analysis. Nevertheless, the scope of writing characteristics that could be identified and reported by computer analysis is large. Surely, the scope of writing characteristics included in future textual analysis software will increase.

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